# VIEWS AND REVIEWS

## ART

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# VIEWS AND REVIEWS

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# VIEWS
# AND REVIEWS

ESSAYS

IN APPRECIATION

By W. E. HENLEY

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NEW YORK
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TO

ROBERT, LORD WINDSOR

THESE ESSAYS

IN THE APPRECIATION

OF AN ART HE PRACTISES

AND LOVES

W. E. H.

WORTHING, *January* 1902.

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# PREFATORY

*To hold opinions and state conclusions about an art whose technical processes are strange, and whose practice is impossible: this, it has ever seemed to me, is to take oneself more seriously than he may do that would sit well with posterity. And yet,* humanum est errare: *to hold views, and to publish them, is human; and in this bookling I confess myself as naturally given as the rest. Indeed, I have taken not a little pleasure in the work of recovering and presenting its materials from the several volumes in which they were dissembled; for, to be plain, I have seen little to change, and more than once, as in the case of the living Rodin and the dead Charles Keene, I have found myself revising stuff which has so much the trick of to-day, as to seem commonplace and old. Yet was it written near a dozen years ago, and, at the time of writing, sounded alike violent and new and singular. In the same way I see no reason for mitigating what I wrote of Corot and Courbet, of Meissonier and Delacroix, of Rousseau and Vollon, of Monticelli and Rossetti, Reynolds and Gainsborough, Constable and Millet and the brothers Maris. It is not all the truth I*

*know; but I believe that it is mostly by way of being true, and I pass it on for what it is worth. Frankly, I think it is worth something: whether little or much is not for me to say. If I mistake, and it be naught (like the Knight's pancakes), at least I may claim to have read few books into my pictures, to have done my best to keep my painting more or less unlettered, to have proffered my conclusions, such as they are, fairly well purged of sentiment. So did not Hazlitt, nor did Ruskin; and if it must be that I fail with these, I doubt not (such is the vanity of Man) that I shall take a sour pleasure in reflecting that, be things as they may, my failure is not on all-fours with theirs.*

*It remains to add that what is hereafter set forth is selected from* (1) *the 'Catalogue'* (1888) *of that Loan Collection of French and Dutch Pictures (the first of its kind done in these Islands) which, thanks to my dear dead friend, Robert Hamilton-Bruce, makes memorable the Edinburgh International Exhibition of* 1886; (2) *the 'Century of Artists'* (1889), *prepared by Messrs. MacLehose as a Memorial of the Glasgow Exhibition in* 1888; (3) *the little 'Catalogue of a Loan Collection of Pictures by the Great French and Dutch Romanticists of this Century,' prepared for the Messrs. Dowdeswell in* 1889; *and* (4) *the 'Sir Henry Raeburn,' published by the Royal Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland in* 1890. *The* Keene *and the* Rodin *date from the same year, in the May and June of which they were*

*contributed to 'The National Observer'; while the last number of all was written for 'The Pall Mall Magazine' as late as the July of* 1900. *Here and there I have rewritten; here and there I have added notes; here and there I have done what I could to mend the style. But I have modernized nothing; and on the whole I am well enough pleased to leave the older stuff much as I left it years ago.*

W. E. H.

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# VIEWS AND REVIEWS

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## A NOTE ON ROMANTICISM

Eighteen-Thirty has been called the Ninety-Three of the arts; and the description has a certain justness. In that year, indeed, was fought and won the battle of *Hernani*, and what had seemed a revolt was recognised and proclaimed a revolution. Too much has been made of the affair, no doubt: the interest was mainly one of style, the hero was a representative man of letters, the memory is one that literary men have united to exalt and cherish. But the work of reform was already as good as done. Balzac had published *les Chouans*, Dumas had created the type of the modern historical play in *Henri Trois et sa cour*, Constable had appeared and conquered, Delacroix had exhibited the *Massacre de Scio* and the *Mort de Sardanapale*, Huet and Isabey had broken new ground in landscape, Rude and Barye were violating as they would the academical ideal of

*Hernani*

sculpture, Macready and Miss Smithson had been seen and heard in Shakespeare's own *Othello*, Frédérick was renowned both as the Macaire of *l'Auberge des Adrets* and the Georges de Germany of *Trente ans*, the *Méditations* of Lamartine was almost an old book, Habeneck had founded the Conservatoire concerts, Berlioz was hard at work on the *Symphonie fantastique*, Sainte-Beuve had produced the famous *Tableau historique et critique*, while Hugo himself had renewed and reinspired the lyric faculty of France: so that in the matter of essentials not much remained to accomplish or essay. But when all is said, the occasion was momentous. The poet's claim amounted to nothing less than the prescriptive right of every artist to be as lawless as Shakespeare seemed; his opponents urged that salvation there was none without the mint and anise and cummin exacted by Racine and Boileau; and for five-and-forty nights the question was debated before and by the audiences of the Théâtre-Français. The work of a magnificent and entirely histrionic vulgarian, *Hernani* is rather an intermittent five-act lyric than a drama. But it took its place beside *le Cid*; and there was demonstrated with every circumstance of publicity —what is equally true of Sophocles and Hugo, of the *Iliad* and *la Reine Margot*—that in the composition of a work of art the individual genius of the artist counts for at least as much as the principles on which he has wrought.

## I

What is called Romanticism—the change, that is, in the material, the treatment, and the technical methods and ideals of art which was made in the France of Charles x. and Louis-Philippe—was the outcome of a generation rich in strenuous and potent individualities. The great emotions of the Republic and the Empire had induced such an efflorescence of temperament and genius as the world has not often seen. The suggestion is one that might easily be ridden to death; but I will note that the inspiration of the time was wholly Napoleon's, and it might be argued with some show of reason that Romanticism was as much a part of his legacy as the *Code* itself, or the memories of Austerlitz and Montmirail. It is at any rate certain that the period of his ascendency was a time of intense and peculiar suffering, that it was also a time of enormous enterprise and achievement, and that it was under the pressure of these conditions that the men and women of the Romantic revival—'cette grande génération de Mille-huit-cent-trente,' says Gautier, with honourable pride, 'qui marquera dans l'avenir, et dont on parlera comme d'une des époques climatériques de l'esprit humain'—were engendered and conceived.

*'les vaillants de Mil-huit-cent-trente'*

*Of Nativities*

It is only the few who date from earlier days. Mme. de Staël, the Eve of Romanticism, was born in 1766, five years before Walter Scott; Chateaubriand, the archetype of the movement in splendour of style and insincerity of sentiment, in 1768; Sénancour, whose *Obermann* (1804) had so deep and lasting an influence on Sainte-Beuve and George Sand, in 1770. Béranger, Ingres, and Charles Nodier followed in 1780; Habeneck in 1781; Lamennais and Rude in 1782 and 1783; Mlle. Georges, the original Lucrèce Borgia and Marguerite de Bourgogne, in 1786; David d'Angers in 1789—a year after Byron; Géricault, Scribe, and Lamartine—with Meyerbeer, whose share in Romanticism is large enough almost to make a Frenchman of him—in 1791; Charlet in 1792; and Lablache in 1793. All these, however, were the elders of the movement, whose more active and more characteristic forces began to be in one or other of the twenty years between the beginning of 1795—which saw the birth of the historian Thierry and the sculptor Barye—and the end of 1814—which gave Prince Bismarck to Germany, and to France the painter of the *Glaneuses* and the *Berger au parc*. Corot came in 1796; Thiers and Pierre Leroux, in 1797; Michelet and Méry in 1798; Balzac, Halévy, Henri Monnier, Alfred de Vigny, and Eugène Delacroix in 1799. Frédérick Lemaître, the hero of half a hundred memorable

dramas, was, like Heine, 'one of the first men of the century'; his rival, Bocage, and his 'female,' Marie Dorval—the Dorval of *Antony, Chatterton, Angelo, Marion Delorme*—were, like *Atala*, the offspring of 1801, as were Ernest Littré, the satirist Gavarni, and the admirable comedian Lafont. Next year was the year of the *Génie du Christianisme*, and among its births were those of Victor Hugo, Lacordaire, Froment-Meurice, Eugène Isabey, Camille Flers, and Alexandre Dumas; those of Berlioz, Mérimée, Quinet, Decamps, and Tony Johannot, were registered in 1803: those of Delphine Gay and Aurore Dudevant, of Nestor Roqueplan, Raffet, Paul Huet, Sainte-Beuve, the musician Hippolyte Monpou — and at Stockholm Marie Taglioni — are credited to 1804. In 1805, connate with our own Disraeli, a *romantique* of the first magnitude in his way and day, were the poets Auguste Barbier and Gérard de Nerval, the painter Eugène Devéria —for a year or two 'le Véronèse de la France'— and the novelist Charles de Bernard. In 1806 were born the tenor Duprez and Louis Boulanger, artist in lithography of a once famous *Ronde du sabbat*, and in colour of a once famous *Mazeppa*; in 1808, Maria Malibran, the painter Diaz, and the actor-sculptor Mélingue, the original d'Artagnan, the original Chicot, the original Henri de Lagardère; in 1810, Hégésippe Moreau, Montalembert, Constant Troyon, Alfred de Musset, and

the incomparable draughtsman, the tremendous caricaturist Honoré Daumier ; in 1811, the year of Thackeray and Liszt, Théophile Gautier and Jules Dupré ; in 1812, Théodore Rousseau in Paris and Charles Dickens at Portsmouth ; and in 1813, with Richard Wagner—in whose work the Romantic ambition was to find its most extravagant expression —at Leipzig, the dramatist Félicien Mallefille and Louis Veuillot the polemist and journalist. The list, which might be made longer, is already long enough ; but its variety is even more remarkable than its length. In the intellectual history of the world it would, I apprehend, be difficult, if not impossible, to name an epoch in which so many men attained to such eminence in so many of the arts at once. We think of the Age of Pericles as the Age of Sculpture, of the Age of Elizabeth as the Age of the Poetic Drama. Romanticism brings into action the full orchestra of the arts. Good work was done in poetry and drama, history and fiction, painting, sculpture, and journalism, singing and acting, symphony and opera and song ; and though much of it has perished, much has lived to be ranked with the best of its kind.

It is, perhaps, a paradox that the great First Cause of Romanticism was Napoleon. It is a truth that, if he were, he was wholly unconscious of

his effect. Being an Italian, he was also in his way an artist. That he liked good acting, and was deeply interested in the theatre, is shown by his patronage of Talma and Georges and Mars, and, above all, by his famous 'Décret de Moscou'; that he was capable of having an opinion of his own in music, by his squabbles with Cherubini and his patronage of Spontini and Lesueur. He could give David a start in painting; he may be said to have created Gros; his first proceeding after the conquest of Italy was to make a clean sweep of all the pictures and statues in the Peninsula that were worth stealing. He had a vigorous literary instinct and a notable sense of style; or he could not have written the series of bulletins and proclamations which Sainte-Beuve, if I remember aright, regarded as the nearest thing to a great national epic in the literature of France. But the despot in him had precedence of the artist; and as a despot he had no love for new ideas and no tolerance for intellectual independence. He cared nothing for Chateaubriand; Benjamin Constant he dismissed and disgraced; he snubbed and exiled Mme. de Staël. That, as he boasted, he would have made Corneille a senator is possible; that he would first of all have muzzled him is certain. He could turn out generals and administrators by the dozen; but it was a different matter when he

*Napoleon*

came to deal with art and artists. His reign was not altogether barren of masterpieces, it is true: for him Gros painted the series of heroic pictures which includes the *Pestiférés de Jaffa,* the *Aboukir,* and the decorations in the cupola of the Panthéon; under his auspices, and at his Académie de Musique Spontini produced the *Vestale* and the *Fernand Cortez,* and Lesueur his *Bardes;* it was to a public of his subjects that Chateaubriand addressed his *Atala* and his *Génie du Christianisme,* and Mme. de Staël her *Corinne* and her memorable *De l'Allemagne.* None of these things was old-fashioned: on the contrary, their tendencies were boldly experimental; they were fresh in sentiment and startling in effect. But, for all that, so far as art is concerned, the France which was handed over to the Bourbons after Waterloo had the look of so much dead land.

*The Classic*

As exemplified in the practice of the great artists of the past—in the tragedies of Corneille and Racine, the comedies of Molière and Regnard, the prose of Sévigné and La Bruyère, the familiar verse of Voltaire and La Fontaine, the discourses of Bossuet and Fénelon, the novels of Lesage, the noble canvases of Claude and the Poussins, the music of Gluck, the histrionics of Lecouvreur

and Baron and Lekain—the classic convention is in the highest degree admirable. Plainly its essentials are dignity of style, lucidity in expression, reticence and elevation of sentiment; plainly it necessitates the cult of elegance and the attainment of sobriety; plainly it is incompatible with the mannerisms which are offensive because they are merely personal. The reverse of the medal is less pleasing. The classic convention is as easily abused as it is hard to handle with an approach to perfection. Selection, its distinguishing principle, can only be exercised with profit upon material at once abundant and of sterling excellence. Given a man of genius who is also a great artist, and we get such results as *Cinna*, and *Armide*, and the *Arcadia*; given a man of talent who is also an accomplished craftsman, and we have to be content with the canvases of Girodet and the alexandrines of the Abbé Delille. In the early Restoration Girodet was reckoned a master, while the memory of the Abbé Delille was cherished by all true children of the Muse. Classicism, in fact, lay on the arts like, not a bloom but, a blight. It was the official faith. It was enthroned at the Académie, it governed the Théâtre-Français, it possessed the Salon, it inspired the Press, and through the Press it shaped the course of public opinion. There are hints of it in Hugo's earlier *Odes*, in Lamartine's *Méditations*, in Géricault's strange and daring masterpiece itself.

*First Causes of Romanticism*

The reforming inspiration was, not developed but, transmitted. The time had been when, as an integral part of French influence, the classic formula was paramount all over Europe. Now it was fallen into the last stage of senile decrepitude even in France, while in Germany and England it had been swept utterly away. The first to rise against it was Germany, where the modern tendency had achieved what is so far its most heroic expression in the instrumental music of Beethoven, and where the quest of other perfections than are recognised in Boileau and La Harpe had resulted, in the hands of such men as Goethe and Schiller, Bürger and Lessing and Tieck, Uhland and the Schlegels, in the creation of a national literature. In England, where the activity of Shakespeare and Milton had never been altogether suspended,[1] its triumph, thanks largely to the teaching of the Wartons, the example of Gray, and the admirable work of Bishop Percy,[2] was

[1] Mr. Walter Raleigh has shown us of late (1900) that to the misunderstanding of Milton's aims and the misuse of Milton's methods we are indebted for all the poetic diction and most of the intolerable didactic verse which is the gift of the Eighteenth Century to English-speaking men. [1901.]

[2] And Horace Walpole—I suppose he also did his part: though *The Castle of Otranto* is a piddling piece of supernature, and *The Mysterious Mother* is—but how to qualify *The Mysterious Mother*? Yet without Horace Walpole we should probably have had a different Mrs. Radcliff.

easy and rapid. Goethe had owed his awakening to the example of Shakespeare; and it was the first-fruits of this conjunction—the *Goetz von Berlichingen* of 1771-3—that, with Iffland's plays and the ballads of Bürger, determined the destiny of Walter Scott, and so called into action the fiery and awakening genius of Byron. With these two at work, the act of change was soon accomplished. Of course they did not stand alone. Beside them were Crabbe, Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley in poetry: with Hazlitt and Lamb in criticism, Coleridge in criticism and poetry, Siddons and Kean in histrionics, and Turner, Constable, and Lawrence in painting. But I think it may be said, that the master forces of the Romantic revival in England, and, after England, the most of Europe, were Scott and Byron. They were the vulgarisers (as it were) of its most human and popular tendencies; and it is scarce possible to exaggerate the importance of the part they bore in its evolution. In their faults and in their virtues, each was representative of one or other of the two main tendencies of his time. With his passion for what is honourably immortal in the past, his immense and vivid instinct of the picturesque, his inexhaustible humanity, his magnificent moral

and Mrs. Radcliff (it is well known and established) was useful to Byron—even if she did not inspire his works. So that Horace Walpole, against his will or not, is, he also—he the Universal Faddle!—a precursor. [1901.]

health, his abounding and infallible sense of the eternal realities of life, Scott was an incarnation of chivalrous and manly duty; while Byron, with his lofty yet engaging cynicism, his passionate regard for passion, his abnormal capacity for defiance, and that overbearing and triumphant individuality which made him one of the greatest elemental forces ever felt in literature—Byron was the lovely and tremendous and transcending genius of revolt. Each in his way became an European influence, and between them they made Romanticism in France. The men of 1830, it is true, were neither deaf to the voices, nor blind to the examples, of certain among their own ancestors: Ronsard, for instance, and the poets of the Pleiad, Rousseau and Saint-Simon, André Chénier and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Villon and Montaigne and Rabelais. But it is a principal characteristic of them, that they were anxiously cosmopolitan. They quoted more languages than they knew. They were on intimate terms with all the names in the æsthetic history of the world. They boxed the compass for inspiration, and drank it in at every point upon the card: from Goethe, Schiller, Hoffmann, Heine, Iffland, Beethoven, Weber in Germany; from Dante, Titian, Rossini, Piranesi, Gozzi, Benvenuto in Italy; from Constable, Turner, Maturin, Lawrence, Shakespeare, Thomas Moore in England; from Calderon, Goya, Cervantes, the poets of the *Romancero*, in Spain. But all these were

later in time than Byron and Scott, or were found less potent and less moving when they came. Thus, the *Faust* of Goethe was not translated until 1823; the *Eroica* of Beethoven, whose work was long pronounced incomprehensible and impossible of execution, was only heard in 1828, the real *Freischütz* some thirteen years after; while Macready's revelation of Shakespeare, till then (Voltaire and Ducis and the Abbé Prévost notwithstanding) not much except a monstrous and mysterious name, was contemporaneous with Habeneck's of Beethoven. Scott and Byron, on the other hand, had but to be known to be felt, and they were known almost at once. I have said that the effect of Romanticism was a revolution in the technique, the material, and the treatment of the several arts. I do not think I affirm too much in adding that, but for Scott and Byron, the revolution would have come later than it did, and would, as regards the last two, have taken a different course when it came.

As in England, the first in the field was Scott. When he attended the Congress of Paris in 1815 the fame of his verse had preceded him, and his novels were freely imitated during the early Restoration: he was speedily accessible (1816-36) in translations —by Martin, Pichot, and Defauconpret—of which *Sir Walter*

some fourteen hundred thousand volumes were sold in his very lifetime. And his generous and abounding influence was felt with equal force by the average reader and the pensive poet. To say nothing of *Cromwell*, which may well be referable in some sort to *les Puritains d'Écosse* (which is, being interpreted, *Old Mortality*), one of Hugo's first attempts in drama was an *Amy Robsart* written in collaboration with Paul Foucher; Op. 1. of Berlioz is a *Waverley* overture; subjects from *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward* occur with pleasing frequency in the catalogue of Delacroix; the origin of such notable departures in romantic prose as *Notre-Dame*, the *Chronique de Charles IX.*, and *Isabelle de Buvière*, and of such achievements in romantic verse as the *Pas d'armes du Roi Jean*, is patent. Scott, indeed, was responsible for the historical element in Romanticism. He taught his pupils to be interested in the past, to admire and understand the picturesque in character and life, to look for romance in reality, and turn old facts to new and brilliant uses. He was, no doubt, the Great First Cause of 'le jeune homme moyen-âge,' and through him of a dismal phantasmagoria of castellans and high-born damozels, of rapiers and donjon keeps and long-toed shoes; but he must also be credited with the inspiration of not a little of what is best and most enduring among the results of the Romantic revolution.

*The Wicked Lord B——*

Nor may it be forgotten—in truth, it cannot be too constantly recalled—that Romanticism was above all an effect of youth. A characteristic of the movement—which has been called 'an aesthetic barring-out'—was the extraordinary precocity of its heroes. The *Dante et Virgile* and the *Radeau de la Méduse*, the *Odes et ballades* and *Hernani*, *Antony* and *Henri Trois et sa cour*, *Rolla* and the *Nuits*, the *Symphonie fantastique* and the *Comédie de la mort*, are master-stuff of their kind, and are all the work of men not thirty years old. Now, Byron is pre-eminently a young men's poet; and upon the heroic boys of 1830—greedy of emotion, intolerant of restraint, contemptuous of reticence and sobriety, sick with hatred of the platitudes of the official convention, and prepared to welcome as a return to truth and nature inventions the most extravagant and imaginings the most fantastic and far-fetched—his effect was little short of maddening. He was fully translated as early as 1819-20; and the modern element in Romanticism—that absurd and curious combination of vulgarity and terror, cynicism and passion, truculence and indecency, extreme bad-heartedness and preposterous self-sacrifice—is mainly his work. You find him in Dumas's plays, in Musset's verse, in the music of Berlioz, the pictures of Delacroix, the novels of George Sand. He is the origin of *Antony* and *Rolla*, of *Indiana* and the

*Massacre de Scio,* of Berlioz's *Lélio* and Frédérick's *Macaire*: as Scott is that of *Bragelonne,* and the *Croisés à Constantinople,* and Michelet's delightful history.

As regards these elements, then, Romanticism was largely an importation. As regards technique—the element of style—it was not. Of this the inspiration was native: the revolution was wrought from within. The men of 1830 were craftsmen born: they had the genius of their material. The faculty of words, sounds, colours, situations was innate in them: their use of it is always original and sound, and is very often of exemplary excellence. It is hard to forgive—it is impossible to overlook—the vanity, the intemperance, the mixture of underbred effrontery and sentimental affectation, by which a great deal of their achievement is spoiled. Such qualities are 'most incident' to youth; and in a generation drunk with the divinity of Byron they were inevitable. Bad manners, however, are offensive at any age, and the convinced *Romantique,* as he was all-too prone to make a virtue of loose morals, was all-too apt to make a serious merit of unmannerliness. But good breeding and moral perfectness are not what one expects of the convinced *Romantique*:

*Style*

what we ask of him—what we get of him without asking—is craftsmanship, and craftsmanship of the rare, immortal type. Hugo has written a whole shelf of nonsense; but in verse, at least, his technical imagination was Shakespearian. The moral tone of *Antony* is ridiculous; but it remains the most complete and masterly expression of some essentials of drama which the century has seen. The melodic inspiration of (say) *Harold en Italie* and the *Messe des morts* may, or may not, be strained and thin; but if only his orchestration be considered, the boast of their author, 'J'ai pris la musique instrumentale où Beethoven l'a laissée,' is found to be neither impudent nor vain. In a sense, then, it is fitting enough that the year of *Hernani* should be accepted as a marking date in the story. If it have nothing else, assuredly *Hernani* has style; and the eternising influence of style is such that, if all save their technical achievement were forgotten, the men of 1830 would still be remembered as great artists.

*Et puis, voilà!*

The revolution triumphed, and with reason; but its triumph was very far from being absolute. It proved the greater *Romantiques* to be men of singular strength and genius; it cleared the air of a poisonous mist of prejudice and affectation; on

every hand it opened up new paths, and discovered new horizons; above all, it discovered a dazzling world of novel and appropriate material. But it did not demonstrate the inherent and intrinsic superiority of the new convention to the old. At this point the argument for Romanticism breaks down. For instance, it did not completely conquer the public esteem. In 1831 the receipts of the Théâtre-Français ran down one night to something over seventy francs; in 1837, when Bocage and Frédérick were at the height of their fame, they ran up again to close on two hundred sterling a night: with Rachel on the stage the classic repertory—Corneille, Racine, even Voltaire—was found as great and moving as ever. This was in the heyday of the movement, and I give the fact for what it is worth. But apart from the popular esteem, something may be said for the view that perhaps the most perfect of all the results of Romanticism is the art of Corot, in which the style is that of a pupil of Claude, while the matter is that of an inheritor of Constable; and the cult of Corot is a matter of to-day. It remains to note—though this is rather interesting than significant—that the Romanticism of 1830 was never an official success. The rancour and the infamy, with which its beginnings were received, are in strange contrast with the good temper and (on the whole) the fairness which marked the course of the anti-classical

movement in England, where Byron was the spoiled child of Gifford, and there was none much readier than Hazlitt the arch-radical to do justice upon the arch-tory Scott. They may be said to have pursued it until the end. Dumas was never of the Académie, nor were Gautier and Balzac, while Barye had to wait for the distinction till he was close on seventy years old. Berlioz was rejected more than once, and so was Eugène Delacroix: only because they knew the weight and the value of official recognition with the world, did they stoop to insist upon having their way. Quite late in life the one was selling his pictures for a few pounds apiece, while the other, after a career of obloquy and glory, was at last obliged to burke his ideas as they came, lest they should grow into symphonies, which it would have made him bankrupt to produce. In fact, the development of some brilliant and profiting notorieties notwithstanding, Romanticism was no more a popular than an official success.

## II

Not many men have exercised so potent and so profound an influence in art as Louis David. His effect upon the painter of the *Pestiférés de Jaffa* is typical of his authority in life. In 1823, David being then in exile at Brussels, Gros was at the very top of

*Gros*

his fame. He was a Baron, a Knight of the Order of Saint Michael, and a member of the Institute; he was high in favour with the King, as he had been with the Emperor; he was Professor of Painting at the École des Beaux-Arts; he had taken over David's School, and was known for the kindest and the most competent of teachers. Yet it is told of him that, when he conveyed to David the gold medal struck in honour of the master by his former pupils, he no sooner caught sight of the house in which the old despot had taken up his quarters than he was seized with a passion of terror and respect, and had to sit down in the street, and collect his spirits, ere he could bring himself to knock at the door. Nor was this the worst. Gros was the earliest of the *Romantiques*: he had formulated a convention, developed a style, demonstrated the possibilities of a vast amount of new material, and shown the way to regions unknown or inaccessible before; his greater works had taken rank with the masterpieces of the French school; yet when David wrote to him, that he was to give over the painting of buttons and cocked hats, look up his Plutarch, and enrich the world with a real historical picture, he obeyed his instructions to the letter, and returned in all simplicity and good faith to the practice of the Heroic Nude. He was reviled as a renegade, and denounced as a reactionary; the revolution he had initiated was

triumphing all along the line; he ceased to be able to sell his pictures. But, though David was dead, he went on conning his Plutarch, and painting exactly as he would have done had David been at his elbow. In the June of 1835, after a last colossal failure at the Salon, he drowned himself in the Seine. That, however, was only the end of the man. The artist had committed suicide some fourteen years before, and had done it by David's orders.

With Classicism as the official cult, and a disciplinarian of the stamp of David in authority, the chance of heresy, it might be thought, was insignificant. But in truth the beginnings of Romanticism were easy, in all the arts. At the inception of the movement the expression of heterodox views was the reverse of unwelcome. In literature the success of *Atala* was instant and complete; in music the experiments of Spontini and Lesueur were considered with enthusiasm; it was not otherwise in painting, though here the iron will of David, his intense and rigid personality, his fine craftsmanship, and his immense authority, were felt as vigorous immediate influences. He had started as an imitator of Boucher; had studied the

*David*

antique in Rome (1775-80) under Vien; had returned to Paris an incarnation of that interest in the work of the Greeks and Romans among whose first fruits is the *Laocoon* of Lessing; had painted the *Bélisaire*, the *Serment des Horaces*, the *Mort de Socrate*; and had so completely stayed the movement of French art that his pupils (it is said) made studies on the back of stray canvases and drawings signed by Antoine Watteau. That solemn mockery of things antique, which was a characteristic of the Revolution, appeared to him in the light of a living, dominating reality. He carried it from painting into politics, and back again from politics into painting; he believed in it as the outward and visible sign of civic and artistic virtue; much of its vogue with the general may be attributed to his personal influence and example. The suppression of the Académie de Peinture was largely his work, as were a number of changes and reforms besides; he began, but never finished, an enormous picture of the Session of the Tennis Court,—'famed *Séance du Jeu de Paume*,' as Carlyle calls the business; he was responsible, among other abominations in pasteboard or in plaster, for the hideous and colossal allegory which—'imposante par son caractère de force et de simplicité'—should represent, to the admiration of all good patriots, 'l'image du peuple Français' defying the world from a pedestal composed of 'les effigies des rois et les débris de leurs vils attributs'; he was

master of the revels to the Republic and gentleman-usher to the newly elected Supreme Being; in a style and temper which may be said to have made him a *Romantique* before the fact, he painted the posthumous portraits of Lepelletier Saint-Fargeau and Marat; he idolised Robespierre, with whom he offered (publicly) to share the Socratic hemlock. After the 9th Thermidor he was violently denounced in the Convention; stigmatized as a 'vile usurper' and a 'despot of the arts'; suspended from his service on the Committees; arrested more than once, and kept in durance for months at a time; and saw his *Marat expirant* and his *Lepelletier* removed in infamy from their place in the Panthéon. But at last he regained his liberty, and in no great while he had regained his credit. He painted his *Enlèvement des Sabines*; he was made a member of the Institute; his studio—from which, at one time or another, he sent out such disciples as Gros, Ingres, Drouais, Gérard, the elder Isabey, Schnetz, Granet, Girodet, Rude, Gudin, David d'Angers, and Léopold Robert—was thronged with pupils. His rivals were also his imitators; his ascendancy was so real, and his dictatorship so absolute that Prud'hon, as late as 1810, was obliged to change his style, and paint an heroic allegory for the Salon: 'pour obtenir,' says Delescluze, 'la faveur d'être placé au nombre de ce qu'on appelle les peintres d'histoire.'

But if David was strong, Napoleon was stronger. It was a feature in his campaign against the future that his work should receive an adequate pictorial expression; and David, whom he met and subjugated at the outset of his career, was among the means he used to his end. He began by sitting to the painter for two portraits: one the magnificent sketch (unfinished) of the General of the Army of Italy; the other that one of the First Consul on horseback which is known as *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*. Afterwards he appointed David his painter in ordinary; obliged him to remember that he was the artist of the *Marat expirant* and the *Serment du Jeu de paume* as well as of the *Sabines* and the *Bélisaire*; ordered him out of the world of sculpture-in-paint he lived to represent, and made him put aside his *Léonidas*, and set to work on the *Couronnement de Napoléon* and the *Distribution des Aigles*. David was a born tyrant, but hero-worship was a necessary of his life. He adored Napoleon, as he had adored Marat and Robespierre. He could refuse his idol nothing. He appears to have uttered not so much as a murmur against the popularity of those pictures of buttons and cocked hats with which, during year after year of the Empire the Salon was crowded. It was not until his idol and himself were banished men, and the splendid pageant of Napoleonism had vanished

*A Gascon Gascon et demi*

like a dream, that he took up his testimony against them, and reminded his old pupil that the way to salvation lay through Plutarch.

David's concessions were, however, as those of one royalty to another and greater. It was far otherwise with Gros. Without the Napoleonic inspiration he might never have deviated into originality at all. A favourite with his master and with Mme. Vigée-Lebrun, he had escaped, with David's help, from the Paris of the Terror, and betaken himself to the Italy of the First Campaign: and at Milan he had fallen in with Josephine. It was the beginning of fame and fortune. Josephine was too generous and impulsive to do good by halves. She took up the young painter with enthusiasm; introduced him to her husband; got him commissions—the *Bonaparte à la bataille d'Arcole* among them; and ended by making him one of the Committee of Selection appointed to furnish Paris with the treasures of Florence and Rome. One consequence of this function was that Gros became a worshipper of Michelangelo; another that he served under Masséna in the Defence of Genoa, and saw war face to face. Returning to Paris (1801), he was chosen to paint for the State a picture of the

*De Forti Dulcedo*

Battle of Nazareth. The work was begun, but never finished. It would necessarily have been an apotheosis of Junot, and the First Consul, who had his own opinion as to the unique and proper subject for such distinctions, was not slow to cancel the commission. He replaced it by another, with a theme in which he took an interest of a different kind; and in 1804 Gros exhibited the famous *Pestiférés de Jaffa*. Its effect was triumphant: it was hung round with laurel and palm; it was purchased for the State for as much as 16,000 francs—in those days a magnificent sum; the painters, Vien and David at their head, gave a banquet in its honour. Its success was deserved: it invested an act of life with heroic dignity, and it did this by means of a presentment of the truth, imaginative indeed, but literal and direct enough to convey an intense suggestion of reality; it was eminently personal in subject, treatment, and style, and it was also a revelation of material. Its tendencies were accentuated, and its conclusions were stated more resolutely, and in some sort more brilliantly, in the *Aboukir* of 1806 and in the *Eylau* of 1809, the one a picture of war in the act, the other of war as it looks next day. It was impossible that such work should not inspire a vast amount of experiment and change: the sentiment was too novel and affecting, the material too rich, the effect too striking and complete. In the *Pestiférés*—the *Atala* of painting

— Romanticism was formulated and suggested; with the *Aboukir* and the *Eylau* it became inevitable. Gros, as we have seen, was presently to deny his work and go over to the enemy: he was weak of will, too, and deficient in self-confidence, and it is doubtful if he realised the value, or perceived the possibilities, of his discovery. But the inspiration of which, whether consciously or not, he had been the vehicle, had already passed into the common stock. Ten years after the *Eylau* Géricault, who had forced his way to the front as early as 1812, exhibited the *Radeau de la Méduse*. Like his friend and fellow-worker, Delacroix, whose *Dante et Virgile* was itself but four years off, Géricault was a pupil of Guérin, but a follower of Gros. Plainly, therefore, the influence of Gros was creative as well as quickening. The inception of the movement was his; and it was also his to determine the direction of the most active and potent agencies of its second phase.

*Géricault and Delacroix*

Géricault had lived and worked in England (it is told of him, that he was profoundly impressed by the great romantic landscape of Turner); he was splendidly gifted and admirably trained; he was full of daring, energy, ambition, a born leader of men. But he died at thirty-three, his

work—though he had done enough for fame—no more than begun, his measure only indicated ; and the conduct of the movement, which had by this time become militant and progressive, devolved upon his friend and disciple Eugène Delacroix. In line with him were artists of the stamp of Bonington (another Gros man) and Decamps, Scheffer and Delaroche, Boulanger and Devéria, and in another branch of painting Isabey, Huet, Troyon, and Camille Flers. They were good men in their way, and they did good work, each after his kind. But the strongest and the most representative of all was Delacroix ; and, by virtue no less of his qualities than of his aims, he was soon the chief of the advance. But while he was the hero of the rebel camp, he was the horror of the other. His first picture had the honour to be described as the work of a drunken broom ; his second was denounced as a deliberate attempt to establish the divinity of the Ugly ; he got a commission from the Chief of the State, and he was requested to make the work as unlike a Delacroix as possible ; his famous 'Voilà trente ans que je suis livré aux bêtes' is but a plain account of his career. The reason is not far to seek. For one thing his message was original and disturbing, and for another his manner of utterance was singularly individual and new.

*The Romantic Ideal*

The natural bias of the *Romantique* is towards exaggeration and irrelevance. He must suggest too much, or he cannot believe that he has said enough: he bewilders by sheer expressiveness. With Delacroix the aim and the end of painting was the representation of, not beauty but, emotion. Like most of the men of his generation, he held, at least in the beginning, that passion must be not measurable, careful of form, attentive to deportment, eternally conscious of good breeding, but simply passionate—passionate above all, passionate at any cost—and that nature is natural in proportion as it is violent. His sincerity was unimpeachable, and he worked out his conviction as only a man of genius can. But to see that his art was great was given only to a few, while it was obvious to the many that the immediate effect of his visions of battle and murder and despair was the reverse of anodyne. Moreover, his style was one that lent itself to caricature. His qualities remained inimitable, but to practise his defects was easy; and it came to pass that loose drawing was quoted as a characteristic of style, and false colour as a sign of genius, while a horrible subject was a proof of poetry. 'Le romantisme mal entendu,' Heine wrote in 1831, 'a infecté les ateliers de France; en conséquence du principe fondamental de cette doctrine *chacun s'efforce de peindre autrement que les autres, ou, pour parler le*

*langage à la mode, de faire sortir son individualité.'* Five years after came the famous Salon of 1836. The Classics awoke to a sense of the position, and realised, confusedly but with a certain vividness, that Romanticism—like Impressionism yesterday—was often another name for ignorance and a standing apology for ineptitude. They were in office, of course; and confounding good with bad, the reality and the sham, they resolved to strike *pro aris et focis*—for careful drawing and decorous colour. They shut and barred their doors upon Rousseau; they rejected work by Delacroix, Huet, Marilhat, the sculptor of the *Lion écrasant un boa.* And it must be owned that their exasperation, however crudely and intemperately expressed, was not ill-founded.

## 3

*le Drame*

The chosen field of Romanticism in this stage of its development was drama. The movement was professedly a return to nature in general; the drama was, past all whooping, a return to human nature in particular. Alfred de Vigny was the poet of *Chatterton*; when you said 'Dumas' you said *Henri Trois*, you said *Antony*, you said *la Tour de Nesle*; it was Hugo's to follow up *Hernani* with *Marion Delorme*, and *Marion Delorme* with

*le Roi s'amuse* and *Lucrèce Borgia*. And their interpreters were Dorval and Georges, were Frédérick and Firmin and Bocage. And the drama was humanity in action, with costume and scenery, and the actor's face, the actor's figure, the actor's gesture and port and *prestance*, an incessant, irresistible appeal to the eye. What wonder, then, if pictures also were drama? if the current emotion-in-chief ('Ah! par la mort!' . . . 'Sang du Christ, c'est son amant!' . . . 'Seigneur, tu es un fier coquin!' . . . 'Et que cette bonne lame de Tolède . . . !') found itself expressed in the terms of paint? if, in so many words, Géricault, Delacroix, Horace Vernet, Ary Scheffer, Charlet, Decamps, Boulanger, Gigoux, the Johannots and Devérias, Raffet and Daumier and Gavarni, were all artists in the figure? and if it was in figure painting that the first great victories were gained?

In the field of landscape, where the noblest work was to be done, there was not at first much fighting. The ambition was not yet popular; the sentiment had still to become a part of the general consciousness. The style in vogue was that of Valenciennes, who was born two years after David, and who achieved in landscape a parallel

*Of Landscape*

reform to that effected by Vien and his notable pupil in the pictorial treatment of the figure. He classicised the art, that is: obliterating the traces alike of Watteau and of Joseph Vernet, he laid out the world in backgrounds for a populace of heroes and heroines improved from Plutarch's by an earnest course of second-rate French tragedy. The result was learned and pompous: it had the true geometrical feeling, and was rich in archæological emphasis and the eloquence of perspective. But it was also jejune, insignificant, and profoundly dull. At the worst of times the effect of such work as (say) the Valenciennes in the Louvre—*Cicéron, étant questeur en Sicile, découvre le tombeau d'Archimède, que les Syracusains assuraient ne pas posséder sur leur territoire* is its highly respectable name—could not have been exciting. Valenciennes and his followers, indeed, were only the small change of Claude and the Poussins; and the public was so far indifferent to their results that it was not at once seduced into knowing or caring anything about the proceedings of their assailants. Landscape is not a natural intoxicant. That experiments in the use of such material as the facts of massacre and shipwreck were passionately admired, and as passionately resented, is not surprising: they belong to experience, they are a part of the fabric of life, their interest is dreadfully suggestive. To do as much with effects of light, and studies of cloud, and reminiscences of Asnières

and Montmartre, was manifestly impossible. The material was uninteresting, being unfamiliar; the humanity was too purely subjective to be immediately apparent. Accordingly, the beginnings of Romanticism in landscape were quiet and prosperous enough. Isabey exhibited at twenty, and gained a First Class medal with his first picture; Huet was medalled at twenty-nine, Troyon at twenty-five, Camille Roqueplan at twenty, Jules Dupré at twenty-two; Corot broke ground at the Salon of 1827, and never missed an exhibition till his death.

*Before and After*

The intention of French landscape had all along been mainly decorative. The formula was found almost at starting, and in the hands of Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), Claude Gellée (1600-1682), and Gaspard Dughet (1613-1675), a culmination was attained which is comparable in its way to Raphael's design and the painting of Velasquez. It may be described as a presentment, essentially imaginative and heroic, of some greater aspects and some broader truths of nature. It is an art of luminous dawns and solemn dusks; its aërial architecture is vast in design and largely accurate in fact; its essentials are majesty of line, harmony of parts, dignity of conception,

and a grandiose simplicity of sentiment and effect. It gave an ideal to art, and the strength of its example is not yet departed. But it had little to do with the common, work-a-day world whose pictorial quality, as perceived and developed by Rubens (1577-1640), is the material of modern landscape; and in France, where the realistic theory was not permitted to take root, and where in times comparatively recent the simple and passionate experiments of Georges Michel (1763-1842) were entirely ignored, its effect upon art was the reverse of fortunate. In the work of Watteau (1684-1721), the landscape element, for all its suggestiveness, its mystery and charm, is an accessory; in that of Boucher (1704-1770) and his following, its function is unchanged, if its magic be departing; with Joseph Vernet (1714-1789), a pupil of the Italian pupils of Claude and Gaspar, it began to be once more painted for itself, and to be touched with a serious spirit of observation and inquiry; with Valenciennes (1750-1819) and his tribe—Bidault, Michallon, Bertin, Aligny, and the rest — and the development of the *paysage historique*, it lost, as I have said, all touch with life, and fell, as it seemed, into a state of hopeless anecdotage. At this time, indeed, landscape was at its lowest almost everywhere. The Italian school was dead of emphasis and affectation; in Flanders the seed of Rubens and the posterity of Breughel (1568-1625) had both

passed utterly away; in Holland, where the naturalistic principle had passed from culmination to culmination in the work of Van Goyen (1596-1666), Cuyp (1605-1691), Rembrandt (1607-1669), Ruysdael (1625-1682), Hobbema (1638-1709), there was now the silence of the void. Only in England was there anything of the ardour and the stress of life. There two noble influences had developed: one the tranquil and lovely art of Wilson (1714-1782), the most complete and graceful expression of the Claude convention in existence; the other, the brilliant and suggestive art of Gainsborough (1727-1788). Both were far in the past; but during the first quarter of the present century the men who had arisen in their room were doing greatly as they. Crome (1769-1821) was following with singular strength, intelligence, and originality the lead of Meindert Hobbema, and in founding the Norwich School—Cotman, Vincent, John Crome, Stark, and the others—had established a new centre of activity; Girtin (1775-1802) and Cozens (1752-1799) had given a fresh start to water-colours; the astonishing and eccentric genius of Turner (1775-1851) was in mid-career; Constable (1776-1835) had found a new departure and developed a peculiar inspiration; Thomson of Duddingston (1778-1840) was renewing and reinspiring the heroic convention of the Poussins by bringing it into nearer touch with

nature, and informing it with his own sincere and ardent individuality; it was the epoch of De Wint (1784-1849), David Cox (1785-1859), Copley Fielding (1787-1855), Collins (1780-1847), Harding (1798-1863), to name but these. England had been the last to catch the spark. It was reserved for her to do with French landscape as with French literature, and count for not a little in the royalty of some of the kings of the art. And the chief agent in the work was Constable.

*Constable*

The thing, no doubt, was in the air. Romanticism was a return to more than human nature, after all. The tradition of J.-J. Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and the practice of Scott and Byron and Chateaubriand were making the landscape element an essential part of literature; and in painting the example of Rubens and the greater Dutchmen was found in intimate alliance with the authority of the Englishman Bonington and the initiative of the Frenchman Géricault. When in 1822 Paul Huet entered the *atelier* of Baron Gros, he had already painted for at least two years in the open air, and knew the Ile-Séguin as it were by heart. Huet was only one of many; so that when sowing-

time came, and the sower came with it, the ground was well and widely prepared. How widely and how well was shown by the famous Salon of 1824. Among the exhibitors were Bonington, Lawrence, Thales and Copley Fielding, Harding, Wild, and Constable. Lawrence received the red ribbon; and gold medals were awarded to Bonington and Copley Fielding, who were represented, the one by five pictures and drawings, the other by no less than nine. But the success was the Constables. They were three in number, the chief of them being the *Hay Wain* (originally purchased with two others for £250), presented some years since to the National Gallery by Mr. Henry Vaughan; and the fury of discussion with which they were received was such as to reach the ears and flatter the idiosyncrasy of the painter himself, though (as one who gloried in the name of Briton) he regarded the excitement of his hosts with a feeling of fine, solid, good-humoured contempt. He received a gold medal; his pictures, which at starting appear to have been badly hung, were removed to 'prime places in the principal room'; their effect—with that of *The White Horse*, exhibited next year at Lille and elsewhere—was equally vivid and profound.

In England a respectable failure then and for many years to come, Constable, at this time a man of eight-and-forty, was in the plentitude of

his genius and accomplishment: his theory was not less individual and sound than his practice, notwithstanding a certain lack of feeling for elegance in the use of paint, was masterly. His merit was twofold. He had looked long at truth with no man's eyes but his own: and having caught her in the act, he had recorded his experience in terms so personal in their masculine directness and sincerity as to make his leading irresistible. Never till his time had so much pure nature been set forth in art. He showed that the sun shines, that the wind blows, that water wets, that clouds are living, moving citizens of space, that grass is not brown mud, that air and light are everywhere, that the trunks of trees are not disembodied appearances, but objects with solidity and surface and a place in their aerial environment. He proved beyond dispute, that the tonality of a landscape is none the worse for corresponding with something actually felt as existing in the subject, and that the colours of things are not less representative than their textures and their forms. He demonstrated, once for all, the eternal principles of generalisation, and that a picture lacking in the sense of weather and the feeling for mass: a picture, too, in which the small truths of a scene are preferred before its larger and more characteristic elements: is so little in sympathy with any romantic or poetic view of nature as to have no existence save as a

more or less pleasing pattern. In fact he was found to have carried the realistic ideal to a point so far ahead of the farthest reached by any of his predecessors, that his results, and the convention on which he achieved them, were practically new. What was more, they were new in the right way and to the right purpose. They tended to the cult of sincerity in observation and expression; they showed the use of a complete equipment; they foreshadowed a world of possibilities, the right of way through which was only to be won by close and patient intercourse with nature. They suggested an art, which should deal broadly with man's impressions of natural appearances: with weather, atmosphere, distance, the Sky in its relation to the Earth, the Earth in her subjection to the Sky: and their correspondence with his moods. They were the beginnings, in short, of Romanticism in landscape. They did for it what Scott's novels and Byron's verse had done, or were doing, for fiction and poetry and the drama. They were the inspiration of what is fast coming to be recognised as the loftiest expression of modern painting; for not far behind them was the art of Rousseau, Daubigny, Dupré, Courbet, Diaz, and, above all, Millet and Corot.

# PROFILES ROMANTIQUES

## I

**GEORGES MICHEL** 1766-1848

His place in French art is peculiar. At a time when the classic convention was at its most triumphant, he was painting from nature in the plain of Montmartre, intent upon realising a conception of art adapted from, and largely inspired by the work of Ruysdael and Hobbema. He was, indeed, a *Romantique* before Romanticism; yet when Romanticism came, and was seen, and conquered, it passed him by as though he had not been.

His handling is seldom strong, his modelling is often primitive and naïve; but his colour—whose scheme is one of low blues and browns—is sometimes almost personal, and is nearly always decorative, and his simple portraitures of nature are touched with an imaginative quality that, conjoined with the sound convention of which he was a master, enables them to hold their own upon a wall against the good work of far greater men.

## II

INGRES
1780-1867

Ingres was born into an epoch which tempered revolt and massacre with a studied mimicry of the antique; and when, after a term of work at Toulouse under Roques (1754-1847), who had been the friend and fellow-student of Louis David at Rome, under Vien (1716-1809), he came to Paris, and was received (1796) in David's studio—'David,' said he, 'a été le seul maître de notre siècle'—he was already himself. Already, that is, he considered form to be the essential in art, and saw in painting, not colour nor handling but, only drawing and design.

Under David, 'a sculptor in two dimensions,' these tendencies were steadily developed. In 1801 he won the Prix de Rome; but the State had no money to spare, and it was not until 1806 that he could take his place in the Villa Médicis, where he remained some fourteen years, addicting himself, like his master, to the study of the paintings of Herculaneum and Pompeii, and, unlike him, to the worship of Raphael, whose work he pored over, analysed, and copied with all the force of an ardent and resolute nature. During this period, too, he painted for himself with amazing industry. His exhibits included the *Œdipe et le Sphinx* and the *Odalisque*; in some others he anticipated the material of Romanticism; and in 1824 his *Vœu*

*de Louis Treize* made him suddenly famous. Hitherto the classics had disdained him: now he took his place at the head of the anti-revolutionary army, and for the next ten years he combated upon the sole right side. He had many pupils, and his authority, immense as it was, was increased from time to time by the production of such master-works as the *Bertin*, the *Apothéose d'Homère*, the *Martyre de Saint-Symphorien*. In 1834 he left once more for Rome, this time as Director of the Villa Médicis; and during his tenure of office, which ended in 1841, he produced the *Stratonice*, the *Vierge à l'hostie*, and the *Cherubini*. For the rest of his life he made his home in Paris, where, till the end, he drew, painted, and taught with admirable energy and perseverance, and with a devotion to the principles of art, as he understood them, which resembled the enthusiasm of religion.

He was rude, quarrelsome, violent, excessive in his likes and dislikes. He openly insulted Delacroix —'Monsieur, le dessin est la probité de l'art'—who was one of the staunchest and the most intelligent of his admirers; he was intolerant of all the works and ways of Romanticism; he called Rubens 'the genius of evil,' and held that to compare 'Rembrandt and the others' with 'the divine Raphael' and the Italians was simple blasphemy. But his sincerity was such, and such were his talent and accomplishment, that where he did

not excite enthusiasm he commanded respect. Romanticism is already ancient history; but the fame of Ingres has suffered little change, and even in the anarchy of to-day, when Delacroix is voted dull, and Corot is superannuate, and even Millet and Rousseau are Old Masters in the bad sense of the term, his work is found admirable by painters of many schools. The reason seems to be that what he did was undeniably well done. His colour is cold and thin; such feeling as he had for the medium of paint was not innate but acquired; and his convention, received from David, and improved after the Raphael of the *Stanze*, is not real enough to be human nor lofty enough to be heroic. But in its way his draughtsmanship is almost impeccable; and if it be true that he considered painting as not so much a special art as a development of sculpture, it is also true that in the application of this theory he has seldom been excelled.

## III

**COROT**
1796-1875

Corot is a culmination. On his own ground he may challenge comparison with the greatest. He entered upon his career at a juncture when the classic convention, as developed by the descendants of the Poussins, was mined with decay and tottering to its fall, and as yet the forerunners of Romanticism

were but groping their way towards new truths and new ideals; and it was his to unite in his art the best tendencies of both the new school and the old. It is to be supposed, that his interest in pure Nature and his perception of her inexhaustible suggestiveness were stimulated and determined by the revelations of certain artists who were at once his ancestors and his contemporaries; it is at any rate certain that he was himself as ardent and curious a student of facts as has ever painted, and that the basis of his art is a knowledge of reality as deep and sound as it is rich and novel. On the other hand, the essentials of classicism—composition, selection, treatment, the master-quality of style—were his by genius and inheritance. In the artistic completeness of his formula he stands with Claude; in the freshness and novelty of his material with Constable.

In him, however, there is much that is not Constable, and much that is not Claude. There is Corot himself; a personality as rare, as exquisite, as enchanting as has ever found expression in the plastic arts. He had that enjoyment of his medium for its own sake denied—they tell us—even to Raphael; his sense of colour was infallibly distinguished and refined; his treatment of the rarest type. Given such means, and no more, and it is possible, as Courbet has shown, to do great things. To Corot, who painted as Jules Dupré declared, 'pour ainsi dire, avec des

ailes dans le dos,' much more was possible. In his most careless work there is always art and there is always quality—a strain of elegance, a thrill of style, a hint of the unseen; while at his best he is not only the consummate painter, he is also the most charming of poets. I think it is Cherbuliez who says of Mozart that he was 'the only Athenian who ever wrote music.' The phrase is a good one: it suggests so happily an ideal marriage of sentiment with style. With the substitution of landscape for music, it might be Corot's epitaph. Corot is the Mozart of landscape.

## IV

EUGÈNE DELACROIX 1799-1863

He was still a student when in 1822 he exhibited his *Dante et Virgile*, and conquered reputation at a stroke. Gros (1771-1835), who described the picture as 'du Rubens châtié,' offered to receive him into his studio; but Delacroix, much as he admired that master, refused the honourable opportunity, and till the end remained with Guérin, though Guérin cared nothing for his work. The young man had something to say, and was bent on saying it in terms of his own; he was, besides, a great believer in gymnastics—all his life long he never sat down to paint without making a sketch from Poussin, or Raphael, or the antique;

and it is probable that he thought Guérin, who was only a good sound academical draughtsman, a better master than Gros, whose manner was more personal, and whose talent had certain analogies with his own. For the plastic and decorative parts of art, he studied these elsewhere: in the studios of Géricault (1791-1824), and Bonington (1801-1828), and Paul Huet (1804-1869); in the Louvre under the influence of Rubens; in the Jardin des Plantes with Barye (1795-1875). His indebtedness to Constable (1776-1837), under whose inspiration he completely repainted his second great picture, the *Massacre de Scio*, is matter of history; but it is fair to add that he is said to have anticipated that master's innovations in landscape studies of his own doing, before *The Hay Wain* appeared upon the scene. In 1825 he went to England (Bonington and Isabey were of the party), where he knew Lawrence and Wilkie, heard the *Freischütz* ('avec de la musique qu'on a supprimée à Paris'), was subjugated by the genius of Shakespeare and Kean, and impelled anew in the direction of nature and romance. In 1826-27 he produced, among other things, the historic lithographs in illustration of *Faust*, in which Goethe declared him to have surpassed the author's own conceptions. In 1828 he exhibited the *Mort de Sardanapale*, the *Christ au Jardin des Oliviers*, and the *Marino Faliero*; and in 1830 he painted the

inspired *le Vingt-Huit Juillet.* Two years afterwards he went to Morocco (with the Ambassador, M. de Mornay) and to Algiers, and brought back the material for the *Femmes d'Alger,* the *Convulsionnaires de Tanger,* the *Noce juive,* and other achievements in the same vein. It was the last but one of his journeys. Italy he never saw. He made the round of the Belgian galleries in 1838; and thereafter he quitted France no more.

From the first (much against his will; for he was a nervous and febrile creature, elegant in manners, refined in taste, incapable of pose, and intolerant of notoriety) he was saluted as a champion of Romanticism. But he had seen such mediocrities as Louis Boulanger and Eugène Devéria preferred before him in the past: it was not until the Salon of 1833 had revealed him for a master that he took his place in the forefront of the movement as the equal of Hugo in verse and of Dumas in drama, as a captain of the revolutionary army. Then came the *Bataille de Taillebourg gagnée par Saint-Louis,* the *Barque de Don Juan,* the *Bataille de Nancy,* the *Combat du Giaour et du pacha,* the *Boissy d'Anglas,* the *Ovide chez les Scythes,* the *Justice de Trajan,* the *Médée,* the *Muley Abd-el-Rahman,* the *Entrée des croisés à Constantinople,* the decorations of the Palais-Bourbon, the Louvre, the Hôtel-de-Ville, the *Héliodore* and the *Lutte de Jacob avec l'ange* at Saint-Sulpice—a world of moving and intense

creation; and still his success was only partial. Though Couture affected to despise him, and to Ingres and his followers he was anathema, the painters were with him almost to a man; Courbet himself, though he assumed he could do as well or better—even Courbet is found admitting the superiority of the *Massacre de Scio*. But the public were interested in other things: the plaintive heroics of Ary Scheffer, the 'last tableaux' of Delaroche. The *Hamlet* of 1836 was very far from being the only work of his rejected by the jury; to the anger and amazement of Théodore Rousseau, the *Croisés à Constantinople* itself was coldly received; it was only in 1855 that the painter's force was fully recognised. In 1859, after several repulses, and the preference (amongst others) of Schnetz and Cogniet, he was elected a Member of the Institute, and exhibited for the last time; and four years after, he died. His greatest triumph was yet to come. The exhibition of the pictures and drawings found in his studio was, says M. Burty, 'une réhabilitation et une ivresse.' Art was far cheaper then than now; but instead of the hundred thousand francs at which these relics had been appraised, the sale brought in close on three hundred and fifty thousand. Millet, whose fortunes were at their lowest ebb, was among the buyers. It was hard work for him to get bread, but he could not deny himself a Delacroix drawing.

Apart from his art, Delacroix was a man of singular intelligence, lettered, of a trenchant insight and broad sympathies. In music his ideals were Beethoven and Mozart: he had no liking for the innovations of Berlioz, and could not endure his own to be compared with them. His essays and notes are something more than good reading: they prove that in painting his tastes were not less catholic than sound. He accepted Raphael and Poussin as completely as Rubens and Rembrandt; he thought the world of Charlet and the world of Ingres; he reverenced Holbein, but that did not prevent him from greatly admiring Géricault and Lawrence; his criticisms, in fine, are those of a painter who has mastered the theory as well as the practice of his art, and is alive to beauty in any and every form. For his place in art, it has yet to be decided. In France, as I have said, he is a national glory; in England, where he is little known, and where he is considered with a certain jealousy, as one who compelled success in a department of painting where certain Englishmen had found nothing but disaster, his technical accomplishment has been denied, and his inspiration dismissed as factitious or vulgar. It is argued that he was too thoroughly a Frenchman of 1830 to be interesting to all time and to all peoples; and in the argument there is no doubt a certain truth, as there is in its converse, that

it is precisely because he was a typical Frenchman and a representative of his epoch that he is to be accepted now as one of the greatest in his century. The final judgment will probably smell of both these verdicts. What Delacroix did was to express the spirit, the tendencies, the ideals, the passions, the weaknesses of a new age in terms so novel and forcible as to be absolutely appropriate. The violence, the brutality, the insincerity, the bad taste, of which it is complained, were not specially his: they were inherent in the movement, and we must allow for them in Delacroix as we allow for them in Byron and Hugo, in *Atala* and the *Symphonie fantastique*, in *Antony* and *Rolla* and *la Peau de chagrin*. It is safe to say that, if that be done, much will remain that is imperishable. It has yet to be proved that his literary imagination—the gift of evocation which made him the familiar and the commentator of Ariosto, Dante, Shakespeare, Scott, Byron, and Goethe: the quality, says Baudelaire, 'qui fait de lui le peintre aimé des poètes'—is human and sound enough to survive the touch of time. Of his plastic endowment there can be no such doubt. If he were nothing else, he was a painter; and if he did nothing else, he thought in pictures. His colour—which Rossetti did not like—is not the dress, the decoration, of his ideas, but a vital part of them; often loose and incorrect, his drawing is always expressive

and significant; his invention is inexhaustible; his capacity of treatment may be compared to that of Hugo in words and to that of Berlioz in music. There is no department of painting in which he did not try his hand, and none on which he did not leave his mark. History and romance, religion and portraiture, *genre* and landscape and the figure—in all of them he was Eugène Delacroix.

'En le supprimant,' says Baudelaire, 'on supprimerait un monde de sensations et d'idées, on ferait une lacune trop grande dans la chaîne historique.' That is the poet's view. The painter is not less imperious and explicit. 'Nous ne sommes plus au temps des Olympiens,' says Théodore Rousseau, 'comme Raphael, Veronèse, et Rubens, et l'art de Delacroix'—that Delacroix who represents 'l'esprit, le verbe de son temps,' and in whose 'lamentations exagérées' and whose 'triomphes retentissants' there is always 'le souffle de la poitrine, son cri, son mal, et le nôtre' —that art is 'puissant comme une voix de l'enfer du Dante.' Here is a curiosity of art criticism: perhaps for the only time in history, the poetic and the technical critic are at one.

## V

Bonington's father was for some time Governor of Nottingham Castle; but, being in the worst of

ways 'an artist'—that is, a man incapable of decency or regularity—he was degraded from his official position. Upon this he left England, and went to Paris, where he set up a lace-shop. He was a painter of portraits when he chose; and his son, who also was his pupil, went with him, and at fifteen was copying in the Louvre, and drawing at the École des Beaux-Arts and in the studio of Baron Gros. It was then the beginning of Romanticism. Napoleon had vanished to Saint Helena; but Gros in painting, Spontini and Lesueur in music, and Chateaubriand and Mme. de Stael in literature—all these were living and potent influences, and Bonington, whose training was practically French, and whose sympathies were altogether individual, was destined to play a part not much inferior in importance to the best of them. After his kind, indeed, and in his degree, he was one of the leaders of the Romantic Movement. He knew Géricault, and was one of those who witnessed (1819) the triumph of the admirable *Radeau de la Méduse*. He was the friend, and in some sort the master, of Eugène Delacroix, who professed the highest admiration of him, and whose companion—with Isabey and Colin—he was when, in 1825, the painter of the *Dante et Virgile* and the *Massacre de Scio* crossed the Channel to look about him in England, and study Wilkie and Lawrence and Constable on their own ground; and

**BONINGTON**
1801-1828

to both these, as to many others great and small—Ary Scheffer, Isabey, Flers, Roqueplan, Troyon, and Paul Huet—his work was an influence and an example. He had in him the makings of a great artist; he could achieve, and he could suggest and inspire; it appeared that he was marked out for the highest destiny.

But his career was brief. In 1822 he went to Venice, and what he did there is still, in its way, a national possession. He exhibited—with Harding, Wyld, the two Fieldings, Lawrence, and John Constable—at that famous Salon of 1824 which is the date of a new departure in modern art; and, like Constable and Copley Fielding, he was found worthy of a gold medal. He is heard of again at the British Institution in 1826, and again at the Royal Academy in 1828; and wherever he appears he astonishes and triumphs. He was good, indeed, at whatever he chose to essay. In lithography—a medium in which the Romanticists won some of their greatest triumphs—he was equally active and expert; his work in oils was worthy of the time of brave experiment and achievement at which it was done; in water-colours he was a head and shoulders better than the best about him. Then, his versatility was uncommon: he painted water, and he painted landscape, and he painted history, and his work, whatever the theme, was remarkable. There can be no doubt that, had he

lived, he would have rivalled with the very greatest of the moderns, and have been, like Constable and like Delacroix, a leader and a *chef d'école*. But at seven-and-twenty he died of brain-fever, the result of a sunstroke caught while sketching; and I cannot but think that Art has sustained no greater loss since his demise.

He was a painter of extraordinary talent, and of promise more extraordinary still. 'Il y a terriblement à gagner dans la société de ce luron-là,' says Delacroix, 'et je te jure que je m'en suis bien trouvé.' There are some moderns, he continues, who are his friend's superiors in strength, it may be, and in exactness; but there is none, and perhaps there never has been any, who possesses 'cette legèreté d'exécution, qui, particulièrement dans l'aquarelle, fait de ses ouvrages des espèces de diamants dont l'œil est flatté et ravi indépendamment de tout sujet et de toute imitation.' He could never, he goes on to say, 'se lasser d'admirer sa merveilleuse entente de l'effet et la facilité de son exécution.' Bonington, it is true, was difficult to please; he would often completely repaint 'des morceaux entièrement achevés, et qui nous paraissaient merveilleux'; but his accomplishment and genius were such that 'il retrouvait à l'instant sous sa brosse de nouveaux effets aussi charmants que les premiers.' And withal he had such a talent of adaptation and assimilation as recalls the heroic practice of Dumas. He

would quietly work in a figure, or a set of accessories, from a picture known to everybody who saw him paint; and he would do this in such a way that (it is always Delacroix who speaks) his borrowings 'augmentaient l'air de vérité de ses personnages, et ne sentaient jamais le pastiche. Bonington's gift, indeed, was rarely equal in quality and comprehensive in ambition and attainment. In historical *genre* his achievement has been surpassed; it has been surpassed in landscape and marine; but in all these it is brilliantly individual, and in the two last it has, besides, the charm which comes of sentiment and a right distinction of style.

## VI

DECAMPS
1803-1860

He aspired to paint religion and history, as well as Smyrniote life and true Levantine light and colour; and in 1834, when he exhibited his famous *Défaite des Cimbres*, he had his hour of triumph. It was his one great success in this department: he never reached again the same height of popularity. And the reasons are not far to seek. For one thing, Romanticism was not officially accepted: it was understood to mean no more than immorality in theory and incompetence in practice; and Decamps was one of the ensigns of Romanticism. For another, his education was

imperfect, his brain and hand were out of unison; the one might plan, but the other could not execute. Decamps was naturally proud and angry; and it is not surprising that he should soon have chosen to avoid the trials and disasters of publicity. After 1834 he exhibited but seldom, sold his pictures straight from the easel, and spent his life in profitless attempts at heroic work. 'You are a lucky fellow,' he said to Millet, after the painter of *le Semeur* had shown him all the pictures in his studio: 'you can do what you want to do.' Decamps could not; and he died (of a fall from his horse) a disappointed man.

He was hardly one of the paladins of Romanticism; but he bore no inconspicuous part in the battle, and his influence was good in type and considerable in degree. His intelligence—quick, inquiring, tenacious—readily received new truths and new ideas; he was the sworn admirer of such great explorers as Rousseau and Delacroix; of its kind his interest in nature was both vigorous and sustained; as a colourist he was individual enough to have had many imitators; he grappled hard with the problems of illumination and atmospheric environment; and as a pioneer and experimentalist he is deserving of much respect. He lived to witness the triumph of Romanticism; but the greater honours were not for him, and he is probably best remembered as a discoverer of the painters' East.

## VII

DIAZ
1808-1876

Diaz had many masters—Delacroix, Corregio, Millet, Rousseau, Prud'hon—and succumbed to many influences in turn. But if he followed, it was only that he might learn to lead; if he copied, it was the more completely to express himself. His master-qualities are fancy and charm; but capricious as he was, and enchanting as he never failed to be, he was a rare observer of nature. 'Personne,' says M. Jules Dupré, 'n'a compris mieux que lui la loi de la lumière, la magie, et pour ainsi dire la folie, du soleil dans les feuilles et les sous-bois.' What gives his work its peculiar quality of delightfulness is the combination of lovely fact with graceful fiction. His world would be Arcadia if it were not so real—would be the world we live in if it did not teem with exquisite impossibilities. I think of him as of an amiable and light-hearted Rembrandt. He had a touch of the madness of genius, or that madness of the sunshine (of which his old companion speaks) would certainly have escaped him. And rightly to express his ideas and sensations, he made himself a wonderful vocabulary. His palette was composed, not of common pigments but, of molten jewels: they clash in the richest chords, they sing in triumphant unisons, as the voices of the orchestra in a score of Berlioz. If they meant nothing they would still be delicious.

But beyond them is Diaz—the poet, the *fantaisiste*, the artist; and that makes them unique.

## VIII

His advance was neither erratic nor slow. First seen at the Salon of 1832, he was the recipient of Third and Second Class medals in 1835 and 1840, of First Class medals in 1846 and 1848; of the Legion of Honour in 1849; and of another First Class medal at the Exposition Universelle of 1855, when he exhibited the *Bœufs allant au labeur* by which he is represented in the Louvre.

TROYON
1810-1863

He began with landscape pure and simple, and it was in that field that he won his earlier successes. Like Rousseau, he attempted subjects of several sorts, and went far and often afield in search of inspiration. He was found painting, not only at Sèvres and Saint-Cloud and in the Forest of Fontainebleau but, in Brittany and the Limousin and all over Normandy; and it was a sketching tour in Holland that revealed his vocation to him, and, by determining a change of manner and theme, first set him in the way of immortality. Hitherto (1833-1846) he had been known for the violence of his colour, the truculency of his brush-work, his excesses in the matter of paint. In the study of the Dutch masters—particularly, it is said, of Paul Potter and Rembrandt—he acquired a knowledge

of saner principles, developed a capacity for better work, and discovered his fitness for the conquest of a new province in art; and after 1848 he was himself, he was Troyon the *animalier*, the greatest painter of sheep and cattle of his century. He had succeeded to his true inheritance, and he continued to enjoy it till his death. To say that he was very popular, and sold whatever he would, is to say that he produced much loose, careless, and indifferent stuff: that, in a word, he was no more above pot-boiling than Corot or Van Dyck. But he did great work as well; and his good things are good indeed.

His Romanticism was but an effect of example and the paintiness of youth. Having sown his wild oats, he returned to the contemplation of nature with eyes renewed and a novel understanding; and he recorded a set of impressions distinguished by rare sincerity of purpose and directness of insight in a style of singular breadth, vigour, and felicity. His drawing is loose and inexact; and he composes, not as an inheritor of Claude but, as a contemporary of Rousseau. But he had the true pictorial sense; and, if his lines be often insignificant, his masses are perfectly proportioned, his values are admirably graded, his tonality is faultless, his effect is absolute. His method is the large, serene, and liberal expression of great craftsmanship; and to the interest and the grace of art his colour unites the charm of individuality, the

richness and the potency of a kind of natural force. His training in landscape was varied and severe; and when he came to his right work, he applied its results with almost inevitable assurance and tact. He does not sentimentalise his animals, nor concern himself with the drama of their character and gesture. He takes them as components in a general scheme; and he paints them as he has seen them in nature—enveloped in atmosphere and light, in an environment of leas and streams and living leafage. His work is not to take the portraits of trees or animals or sites, but, as in echoes of Virgilian music, to suggest and typify the country: with its tranquil meadows, its luminous skies, its quiet waters, and that abundance of flocks and herds at once the symbol and the source of its prosperity.

## IX

DUPRÉ
1812-1889

He is an artist who cares nothing for money or fame and everything for art: he is able to follow his bent, and paint as he pleases, and he has had his reward. To the young zealots who have just discovered the Blue Shadow his name and example are of small account. But by artists he is respected and acclaimed as the last of a greater generation.

He is still a contemporary; and to estimate the

worth of his art is impossible. It may, however, be said that his achievement is both vast and varied, and is touched throughout with a peculiar poetry. As becomes the friend and champion of Rousseau, the great experimentalist, the indefatigable explorer, he has attempted nature in all its aspects. He has painted the melancholy of the plain, the peaceful serenity of fat pasture and pleasant upland, the mystery of the forest, the vastness of the sea; and he has infused with his own sincere personality whatever he has done. In an age of backsliding and charlatanism he has upheld the dignity of imaginative art, and the traditions of the school he helped to found and has done so much to illustrate. [1888.]

## X

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU
1812-1867

In the beginning all went well with Rousseau. Romanticism was in the gaudiness of full flower: it was the year of *Antony* and *Darlington* at the Porte-Saint-Martin and of *Marion Delorme* at the Théâtre-Français, of *le Vingt-Huit Juillet* at the Salon and *Robert le Diable* at the Académie de Musique, of Balzac's *Peau de chagrin* and Hugo's *Notre-dame,* the *Atar-gull* of Eugène Sue and the *Roi des ribauds* of Paul Lacroix; and that Rousseau was a deserter from Rémond and a

recreant from the faith of Rémond's gods was sufficient to secure attention to his aims, respect for his ideals, and unshrinking confidence in his capacity. His first Salons were those of 1831 and 1833; in 1834 he appears to have gained a medal, and sold his picture, a *Lisière de bois*, to the Duke d'Orléans; in 1835 he was once more represented, and by a couple of *Esquisses*. Then the tide turned. To the Jury of 1836—Heim, Bidault, Ingres, Schnetz, the two Vernets, Paul Delaroche, Guèrin, among others—he submitted his *Descente des vaches*, a landscape with cattle painted from sketches made in the Jura; and, in company with Marilhat, Champmartin, Paul Huet, Louis Boulanger, Barye, and Delacroix, he was refused a place in the official exhibition. He remained without the gates till 1848; and but for the accident of a revolution he might not have reconquered the right of way so soon.

His position during these twelve years of exile was more or less distressing. Decamps, George Sand, Daumier, Delacroix were his admirers and well-wishers; Diaz, Ary Scheffer, Jules Dupré, the critic Thoré were the most diligent among his friends. Revered and commiserated on the one hand as one of the martyr-saints of Romanticism, he was execrated on the other as a sort of helot in drink. Sometimes he sold a picture, and more often than not he was free to paint and repaint his work at will. He was not of a happy disposition; and, as

he took himself and his reverses with a certain solemnity, 'tis probable that he suffered. Things were first mended for him by the advent of the Second Republic. The official jury was dismissed; the mob of painters took to self-government; and Rousseau was elected one of the jury of 1848, the first under the new dispensation. Then Ledru-Rollin, as head of the State, gave him a capital commission; and after a lifetime of anxious chastity: in the course of which, impelled thereto, as Sensier explains, 'par une susceptibilité outrée de son caractère,' he declined the hand of a young lady to whom he was deeply attached, and who was very much in love with him: he threw in his lot with a *payse* of his who had cast herself on his protection, and retired for good and all to Barbizon. But there was a sickly strain in him; and the passage from absolute failure to comparative success was not at first to his advantage. In 1849 he exhibited for the first time since his exclusion thirteen years before. He won a First Class medal; but when he found that Jules Dupré, who had given him proof after proof of faultless friendship, had received the red ribbon he professed himself affronted, refused to be appeased, and broke with his old comrade there and then. To the Salon of 1851 he sent six canvases; but this year the ribbon fell to Diaz, and Rousseau, after charging the Hanging Committee with conspiracy, and being compelled

to retract his accusation, gave out that he would exhibit no more. He kept his word until the Salon of 1852, where he was represented by an *Effet de givre* and a *Paysage après la pluie,* which gained him at last admission into the Legion. After this the circumstances of his life and the quality of his temper improved. So at the Exposition Universelle of 1855 he was splendidly conspicuous; he made money enough to pay Millet 4000 francs for his *Greffeur*; he had so far improved in temper and tact as to make the purchase not in his own behalf, but as the agent of a rich American. By 1857 he had acquired sufficient importance to be made the victim of a sort of 'knock-out' on the part of a Belgian dealer. In 1861 he sold a lot of twenty-five pictures and studies at the Hôtel Drouot for some 37,000 francs; in 1863 another lot of seventeen for close on 15,000 francs. Three years later Prince Demidoff commissioned him to paint two pictures for 10,000 francs apiece; while with MM. Brame and Durand-Ruel he did business to the extent of 140,000 francs, and after paying his debts was able to spend some 30,000 francs upon Japanese drawings and rare prints. In 1866 he was a member of the Salon Jury and the Emperor's guest at Compiègne; and the year after he sent two pictures to the Salon, exhibited over a hundred sketches and studies at the Cercle des Arts, and was appointed President of the Jury at the Ex-

position Universelle, where he was represented by thirteen of his finest works. For these he was presently awarded one of the four Medals of Honour. The distinction, which he shared with MM. Cabanel, Meissonier, and Gérôme, was a tremendous blow to him. He had set his heart on officer's rank in the Legion; Corot, Pils, Gérôme, Jules Breton, and Français were gazetted without him; the disappointment was greater than he could endure. He was promoted after some little delay; but he had meanwhile been stricken with paralysis, and after a six months' agony he died in the December of the same year. Mme. Rousseau had long been hopelessly insane: you read of her, unconscious of bereavement, capering and singing in the very chamber of death.

Rousseau was not the poet of a site, the wooer of a single dryad. Insatiable of experience, greedy of discovery and conquest, he was for ever breaking new ground and opening up fresh provinces of material. He began by exploring the environs of Paris, and passed at a stride to the rocks and solitudes of Auvergne. He was at least twice in Normandy (1831 and 1832), where he studied the *Côtes de Granville* of his second Salon. In 1834 and 1861 he painted in the Jura, where he collected the material of his *Descente des vaches* and his *Vue de la chaîne des Alpes* (1867). In 1835-36 he went to Broglie, to paint a view of the castle, commissioned of him by the Duke as a gift for

Guizot; and in 1837 he worked long in Brittany, the scene of the *Marais en Vendée* (called 'la Soupe aux herbes') and the *Avenue des châtaigniers*. He was thrice with Jules Dupré in the Île-de-France (1841, 1845, and 1846), and among the booty which he brought back with him were the *Effet de givre*, the *Lisière de bois: Soleil couchant*, and a famous *Avenue de forêt*. From Berry (1842) he returned with the *Mare*, the *Curés*, the *Jetée d'un étang après la pluie*; from Gascony (1844), with the *Four communal* and the *Marais dans la lande*. But his favourite painting-ground was the Forest of Fontainebleau. He discovered it as early as 1833; year after year he lodged at Ganne's, the historic tavern, or in some peasant's cot, within easy distance of the Bas-Bréau and the Gorges d'Apremont; he set up his tent in Barbizon in 1848, and abode there until he died. Here Diaz was his pupil; here Jacque and Millet were his neighbours; here, as in a vast open-air studio, he matured his largest inspirations, resolved his knottiest problems, illustrated his boldest and richest effects. The Forest has had no truer lover and no better painter. He saw it, not as a crowd of trees but, as a monstrous organism, an enormous individuality; and he has rendered as none else has done the sense of its complex mystery and immensity, its infinite changefulness of colour and form, its multitudinous life, its impenetrable confusion of birth and death and increase and decay.

I have traced his wanderings in search of suggestion and experience with this particularity in order to show the range of his ambition, the originality of his experiments, the variety and novelty of his results. As a rule his method of production was painfully laborious and slow: the foundations of his pictures were constructed and made out with a reed pen in their smallest details; and on the formation thus provided stratum after stratum of paint was superimposed, until an end was gained, and he deemed that no more could be done. But the sum of his achievement is very large, and its quality is disconcertingly unequal. It may be that, like Wordsworth, he caught at more than art could grasp; and it may be that his hand was only now and then the faithful servant of his brain; or it may be that he suffered from perplexity, and was fain to grope his way towards ideals that were dimly seen at first, and that shifted shapes as he advanced, as a mountain reveals itself under new aspects with every turn of the road. What is certain is that, while too often niggled and incoherent, 'precious' yet inarticulate, at his best he had originality of conception and sincerity and strength of sentiment, with a large and noble method, a singular power of expressing and evoking emotion, a magnificent view of colour, an admirable potency of style. Sensier relates that, even in his darkest hours, it was hard for him to part with his works: he would keep them

for years, and retouch and repaint till sometimes, as from the unknown masterpiece in Balzac's story, the 'glory and the dream' had been painted quite away. Thus his successors find him most consistently admirable in his *ébauches*—his 'lay-ins'; and the impression produced by his life and achievement is one of incompleteness. His art, indeed, has none of the consummate and joyous mastery of Corot's. It is not seldom heroically inspired and irresistibly expressed; but it is mainly tentative and experimental, and it is often touched with failure.

## XI

MILLET
1814-1875

Millet's real teachers were the Old Masters in the Louvre, and especially Correggio, Nicolas Poussin, and Michelangelo: 'celui qui me hanta si fortement toute ma vie.' From the first he learned the processes of colour and modelling; from the second the principles of composition and the greater and severer exigencies of style; and from the third the mystery of gesture and expression. Other influences were Rubens and Delacroix in one direction, and in another Mantegna, Angelico, and Filippo Lippi; and later Rembrandt came, and the great landscape painters contemporary with himself.

Painted to sell, his earlier pictures are frankly and naïvely sensuous. Their colour is rich

enough to remind us that for years the painter was the friend and fellow-worker of Diaz; in modelling and chiaroscuro they are often admirable; they express, in terms that are sometimes sumptuous and always beautiful, a liberal and healthy sentiment of the nude. It was not until Millet left Paris for Barbizon (1849) that he returned to the ideals of his youth, and became, by swift and easy stages, the epic painter of rusticity. At Barbizon, where he knew Rousseau, and where he laboured till his death, he began by producing his puissant and affecting *Semeur*, which was exhibited in 1850, the year of Courbet's *Enterrement d'Ornans*. It was the first of a long line of masterpieces—the *Glaneuses*, the *Bûcheron et la Mort*, the *Homme à la houe*, the *Meules*, the *Berger au parc*, the *Vigneron au repos*, to name but these—in which the new capacities of landscape, the conquests of Rousseau and Diaz and Constable, are found in combination with an heroic treatment of the figure. This development was Millet's work, and remains the chief of his contribution to art.

Both elements are fused in so close an intimacy as to form but one interest, so that, pictorially considered, each picture of Millet's is an organic whole. But this is not all. Of most the effect is ethical as well as plastic. They are not simply works of art: they are as it were lay-sermons in paint, for they embody ideas which, if not absolutely literary in themselves, are to some extent sus-

ceptible of a literary expression. It was Millet's weakness, in fact, that he was not less poet than painter. The French peasant was his hero, the romance of man in nature his material. To his fellow-craftsmen, his work must always present extraordinary interest; for, while his gift was peculiar, and his accomplishment distinguished, there have been few whose study of reality has been more searching and profound, and few the record of whose observations is so pregnant with significance. But, whether happily or not, he did not work for his fellow-craftsmen alone. He elected, whether happily or not, to be priest as well as picture-maker—to put off in paint a certain number of ideas and sensations which, it may be, had better have been left unattempted save in words. And, whether happily or not, he touched the scenes of that 'epic in the flat' which was his legacy to time with a dignity, a solemn passion, a quality of fatefulness, a sense of eternal issues, which lift him to the neighbourhood of Michelangelo and Beethoven.

## XII

Charles Jacque and Troyon are the *animaliers* of modern landscape. And Jacque has etched and painted sheep and pigs and fowls as few have done; and if his fame be not the highest, it is high enough. His sheepfolds have little in common with the

**JACQUE**
1813-1894

solemn and moving visions of Millet; the magic of Diaz, which transfigures a hunt into something coloured and heroic, is beyond him; he is not so good a painter as Troyon, nor has he so large and true a sense of landscape. But he has represented the forms, the manners, the characters, the movements of certain beasts in an environment of light and air, and with effects of mystery and touches of suggestion that go far to make his election sure. [1888.]

## XIII

**LEYS**
1814-1869

THERE were two painters in Leys. In his earlier work—his studies of manners, and the aspects of things as they are—he was obviously in sympathy with modern aims, and was able to unite a fine atmospheric quality with masterly handling and genuine dignity of style. Some twelve years before his death, however, his manner changed, and he became that Belgian Pre-Raphaelite—the pupil and direct inheritor of the Van Eycks—whom Dante Rossetti esteemed to be the greatest, because the most original, master of the century, and whom others decline to regard as anything but a maker of workmanlike *postiches*—as an artist utterly lacking in the creative faculty, and producing his best work under the impulse of an inspiration partly

imitative and partly archæological. It is said that even in Belgium, as was shown by the middling success achieved by his work at the Exposition Nationale in 1880, his vogue has had its day; that hereafter he is like to be more generously regarded for the personal quality of his few etchings than for the severe and studious unoriginality displayed in his innumerable pictures; that his best pupils resemble him least; that those who have imitated him directly have done nothing worth considering. But, when all is said in his disfavour that can be, there remains no doubt that he was a painter. His greater pictures are marked by learning, finish, careful draughtsmanship, ingenious brushwork. It is true that they are deficient in essentials: often the lines are rigid, the colour is coldly brilliant, the enveloping medium conventional and unreal. But they are master's work, though the master be not of to-day.

## XIV

MEISSONIER

1815-1891

Meissonier's pictures are innumerable: all have amazed the multitude. Some have commanded prices as in the dream of an opium-eating artist in finance. Nay, even spite itself has served him; for when Mrs. Mackay destroyed, with divers circumstances of indignity, the portrait he had painted of her,

the profession made haste to repair the insult with a banquet of honour. Indeed, the felicity of his half-century (and more) of self-production has been imperturbable.

His merits are obvious: so obvious that no millionaire can go wrong with him. It has been said that he paints great pictures on tiny canvases; but to accept the proposition is surely to have an original conception of greatness. Again, it is claimed for him that he is the heir of artists so various and so complete as Terburg and Mieris and Gerard Dow; and again it has to be noted that these men painted the life they lived and knew, while Meissonier's world is purely factitious—is indeed a last expression of that passion for strange suits which was a characteristic of Romanticism. The truth is, he is French of the French: French in his care for microscopic detail, French in his patient ingenuity and his conscientious disdain for what seems to him bad work, French in the neatness of his ambitions, French in the dry, impersonal quality of his colour, the deftness of his handiwork, the logical effect of his line, the trim assurance of his effects. 'Il a mieux que personne le pittoresque de tout le monde'; and that is why, in France and out of it, he seems the culmination we know. [1889.]

## XV

DAUBIGNY
1817-1878

Daubigny's work was unequal: which is as much as to say that, like Corot, he was successful. The Artist suffers in proportion as the Dealer is happy; and Daubigny was sometimes careless, and could on occasion be feeble and tame. But his good work is very good, and must be judged by a standard only lower than the highest. He had a great love for running water: he passed much of his time in a house-boat, *le Bottin*; and, as Mr. Hamerton has noted, for his 'intimate affection,' his 'simple devotion,' to the river of his choice, he was 'rewarded by an insight into its beauty,' which, to compare him for a moment with the famous Englishman who had painted the Seine before him, was entirely wanting in Turner. These qualities of 'intimate affection' and 'simple devotion' are characteristic of Daubigny—are what, in the analysis of his individuality, is most readily disengaged; and it is, I think, from their expression that his art derives its peculiar savour. His imagination is of an inferior strain to Rousseau's; he has elegance, distinction, charm, but not in the supreme degree that Corot has them; he is a pleasing colourist, where Diaz is a great one; his technical accomplishment is admirable, but it would be waste of words to compare it to the *maëstria* of Courbet. Yet the sanity and content-

ment of his regard for nature, his innocent and grateful confidence, as of a happy and not too masterful or curious husband—these are his own. He is perhaps the least of the great Romantic brood; but he belongs to it, and his achievement, from however lofty a level it be considered, and by whatever canons it be tried, is safe from oblivion and superior to disparagement.

## XVI

FRÈRE
1819-1886

Medalled in 1851 and 1852, the late Édouard Frère was decorated in 1855; he was discovered by Mr. Ruskin, who likened his colour to Rembrandt's, and remarked that he 'painted with his soul,' and combined 'the depth of Wordsworth, the grace of Reynolds, and the holiness of Angelico'; he sold himself for twenty years to a Brussels dealer. In a word, he made his fortune, and, applauded everywhere, was especially successful in England and the United States. The long list of his pictures, which have been reproduced by every sort of process, is hard reading.

He is in every sense of the term a popular artist. His talent—originally simple, pleasing, sincere—could not withstand the influence of the enterprising Dealer and the unenlightened Buyer. It is easy enough to 'wallow in the pathetic'; and,

as Frère discovered, it is not less profitable than it is easy. On the other hand, his good work is quite good. Mr. Ruskin's enthusiasm is not in these days easy to understand; and the question whether Frère did or did not 'paint with his soul' has ceased to have any special interest. But there is no doubt that he had character, expression, a certain grace, a thin vein of feeling. In the beginning, too, he painted much from nature, and showed himself by no means indifferent to the practice of his great contemporaries. Perhaps the worst that can be said of him is that, a sentimentalist himself, he exaggerated his defects for the pleasure of a sentimental public.

## XVII

He was a friend of Rousseau, with whom he painted for some time at Barbizon, and who described him as 'a Zoroastrian'—as 'un Parsis enchanté de la lumière orientale.' You read in Sensier how he brought a famous old windmill—the 'Moulin de la Galette'—from Montmartre, which is one of the cradles of modern landscape, with a view to preserving it as a relic, and of transporting it to Barbizon, and rebuilding it for use as a studio. The plan fell through, or there might be something to say of Rousseau's influence upon its

ZIEM
1812

author. As it is, the pair have little in common save their delight in travel and the exploration of sites. For Ziem, though he proceeds from a great school, is by no means a great painter. His manner is facile, elegant, engaging; his colour agreeable and decorative; his observation rather superficial than searching; his sentiment neither moving nor profound. But he has the gift of charm; and his rendering of his impressions of nature is seldom found wanting in some qualities of painting. [1888.]

## XVIII

MONTICELLI
1824-1886

Born in Marseilles, Monticelli was a pupil of Raymond Aubert (1781-1857), who made him a devotee of line, a fanatic of Raphael and Ingres. His conversion began (it is said) before a Delacroix, and was completed by the influence and example of Diaz, in whose neighbourhood, in Paris, he lived for some years, and whose manner he mimicked with such spirit and intelligence that his work was often sold for his master's. Returning south, he painted steadily, sold as fast as he produced, and amused himself with all his strength. It is the nature of the Provençal, as Daudet showed, to admire what is eccentric, noisy, personal, vacant; and Monticelli—handsome, vigorous, eloquent,

persuasive, uncommon—was of all painters the one for Provence. His fame grew legendary: he was not the lawful son of a gauger, but a bastard of the Gonzagas; the great Diaz had secluded him for many years to steal the secret of his colour; and so on: till there was not his like in the length of the Rhone Valley. His story has been but vaguely told; but it seems that to this period of triumph there succeeded one of desperate reverses, for which nobody was responsible but Monticelli himself. A second sojourn in Paris, during which the painter was reduced to the necessity of selling his pictures from the pavement, and herding at night with vagabonds in waste lands and empty houses, ended in flight before the advance of Von Moltke. Monticelli had not only to tramp it to Marseilles, but for six-and-thirty days to paint his way from place to place. Settling in his native city, he adopted his final manner, and stood revealed as the painter of pure sensations, the colourist for colour's sake, who has perplexed and scandalised so many critics. He gave the rein to his faculty of improvisation, producing a picture a day, and selling his work for whatever it would bring. And year by year the paint grew thicker and less significant, the harmonic instinct more eccentric and uncertain, the intellectual quality more childish and obscure. It is said that, like Musset, he took to the worst drink of all—that his rare and admirable temperament was wrecked in absinthe;

it seems certain that in him, as in so many of the imperfectly gifted, the sensualist got and kept the upper hand of the artist. For some time before the end they were but few who knew if he were alive; his 'painted music,' his clangours of bronze and gold and scarlet, his triumphs of unrepresentative effect, had profited him so little.

The be-all and end-all of painting with him was colour. A craftsman of singular accomplishment, to tint and tone he yet subordinated drawing, character, observation—three-fourths of art. Delacroix and Turner used, it is said, to amuse themselves with arrangements in silks and sugar-plums; and what they did in jest, or by way of experiment, was done by the Marseillais in sober earnest, and as the last word of Art. True it is that he has a magic—there is no other word for it—of his own: that there are moments when his work is infallibly decorative as a Persian crock or a Japanese brocade; that there are others when there is audible in these volleys of paint, these orchestral explosions of colour, a strain of human interest, a note of mystery and romance, some hint of an appeal to the mind. As a rule, however, his art is purely sensuous. His fairy meadows and enchanted gardens are so to speak 'that sweet word Mesopotamia' in two dimensions: their parallel in literature is the verse that one reads for the sound's sake only—in which there is rhythm, colour, music, everything but meaning. If this be

painting, then is Monticelli's the greatest of the century. If it be not—if painting be something more than dabbling exquisitely with material—then are these fantasies materialised, these glimpses of the romance of colour, no more than the beginnings of pictures—the caprices of a man of genius gone wrong.

Upon the present generation—which delights to confuse one art with another: which must have descriptive music, and will only take an interest in pictures that are disguised literature—the influence for good of Monticelli, of painting reduced to its simplest elements, is not a thing to be despised. Man's capacity for enjoyment is limited; his capacity of idiosyncrasy—his hobby-horsical capacity—is not; and it is odds but if he feel in all its fulness the vague magic of Monticelli, he may think himself superior to the more varied and more complex enchantment of Raphael and Rubens. In art as in life, the undue development of a special faculty is fatal to the general growth. And what is true of those who make is true tenfold of those who only admire and feel. Where the Artist only breaks his shins, the Amateur is pretty certain to break his neck

## XIX

There is no painter of these times whose work is better known, or has been more liberally

rewarded. In colour, draughtsmanship, the technique of art, he is the type of the Complete Academician. To such as take their cue from Velasquez and Rembrandt he is only (as some one said of some one else) 'a man of letters who has deviated into paint'; but even they are fain to acknowledge his wonderful cleverness, to accept his advice in archæology and his inventions in character and incident, and to admit that, if what ought to be expressed in words be, *ipso facto*, appropriate to expression in pigment, then is he beyond dispute a painter. [1889.]

GÉROME
1824

## XX

Like Millet, Jules Breton paints the figure in its relation to landscape, and he paints it with a view to the pictorial expression of its innate significance and sentiment. But he has neither the strength nor the subtlety of his exemplar: he is lacking alike in Millet's dignity of style and in Millet's mastery of material and of fact. He is the poet-in-paint of the Breton *femme des champs*, and his record of her aspects and her qualities is always emphatic in terms and a thought too sentimental in feeling and effect. Still, his intention is generally grandiose, and—

JULES BRETON
1827

while his colour is rather impersonal than not, and his handling not more than well educated and correct—his results are sometimes marked by real solemnity of emotion and propriety of utterance. [1889.]

## XXI

**VOLLON**
1833-1900

Vollon, in water-colours as in oils, is a master-craftsman. His colour is rich, spontaneous, and individual, his drawing at once suggestive and exact; while in his brush-work—large, vigorous, expressive—there is the gusto of the born painter. Withal, his range is wide. The *Femme du Pollet*, the *Pierre Piachat* (1868), the *Espagnol* (1878), are essays in the presentment of human character and the human form; the *Port de la Joliette* is a picture of moving ships and blue water, of sunshine and sea air and marine architecture. But his best work has been done in still-life. In man and in landscape there is always character, and there is always form: they possess an interest apart from that of paint; it is enough to show them as they are by means of accurate drawing and representative colour. The case is far other with flowers and fruit, with copper stewpans and joints of meat and the textures of fur and feather. Either they must be left alone, or they must be pictorially seen and pictorially treated. To

render the facts of them grain by grain, or hair by hair, or petal by petal, is to play a losing match with the camera. Imitation for its own sake is the basest of aims, and the pursuit of it can have but the meanest of results. In Vollon's art, as in Chardin's, the quality of literalism is the last of which the artist has dreamed. He sees and renders his subjects as a painter pure and simple—as parts of a whole whose other components are immaterial and intangible. The question with him is not one of textures and surfaces, but one of the presentation of light, the suggestion of air, the differentiation of values, the development of plane on plane and gradation after gradation in obedience to the requirements of modelling, the pictorial record (in a word) of the innumerable operations of the environing medium of whatever exists as material for art. To put the matter in other terms, he stands in the same relation to the successors of Constable as Chardin stood to those of Hobbema and De Hooch. He treats his armours and his piles of fish, his bowls of strawberries and dead birds and groups of pots, precisely as an open-air painter deals with clouds and distances and trees. The sun shines on them, and the wind blows; they are localised in space, and shown together with the facts of their unseen yet all-important envelopment. His still-lifes, indeed, have been described as 'des paysages d'intérieur,' and as they have the

essential qualities of good modern landscape, the phrase is neither infelicitous nor untruthful.

## XXII

FANTIN-LATOUR 1836

His art is a development of Romanticism. His portrait groups are modern in every sense of the word; his allegorical pictures have a certain smack of 1830 and of the Courbet of the *Atelier du Peintre*; he is a student of atmosphere and light, and has recorded his impressions in appropriate and novel terms. Of late years his manner has become a little hard and dry, and his care for detail somewhat exaggerated. But he is always a craftsman, and in his best work he is a genuine colourist and something of a poet. [1888.]

## XXIII

LEGROS 1837

He began, with Champfleury, as a 'realist'; but he is better described as 'an Old Master belated,' and from the first the description fitted. It is only in sentiment and choice of subject that he is a modern. The developments of Constable and his successors can scarce be said to exist for him. In his treatment of the figure he is inspired by the example

of Holbein and Jehan Foucquet; in his landscapes he is a pupil of Nicolas Poussin; he touches hands with Van Dyck and Rembrandt in his etchings, and with Vittore Pisano in his medals. His colour, again — severe, solemn, chastened—is modern in no sense of the word; and the contrast between himself and his contemporaries is made more trenchant by the austerity of his ideals, his disdain of trick, the sustained dignity, the lofty sobriety, the austere distinction of his art. It has been said of him, and with truth, that he lacks charm, and seeks and finds too exclusively the beauty of ugliness. But it is also true that he is a consummate artist, whose influence for good can hardly fail to be enduring, heartening, and profound. [1888.]

## XXIV

Among those who interested him were Corot, Courbet, Fantin-Latour, Daubigny; but the prime favourite of all was Édouard Manet (1833-1886). Manet had developed the theory of what is called *impressionnisme*, and was struggling to paint things as he saw them, without chiaroscuro and with an exact regard for the action upon his subjects of the 'diffused light' in which they were enveloped, and by which their shapes were modified and revealed. Under this same 'diffused light' it was

BASTIEN-LEPAGE 1848-1884

that the younger man considered Nature: Nature who, in the phrase of Mr. W. C. Brownell, was 'rarely or never his material,' but 'nearly always in exact strictness his model.' It was in deference to its requirements, and with a fearless trust in the results of its operation upon the cold sunlight and the grey-green leafage of his own department of the Meuse, that he produced his most striking and most personal effects; in the pursuit of it he grew blind to ideal beauty, and was betrayed into the perpetuation of a novel and unlovely mannerism of tone and colour and aspect. But his appreciation of its possibilities was so just, and his use of them so ingenious and suggestive, that his work would have been remarkable in the presence of these elements alone; and in some other directions his endowment was of the best. To a sense of character, alike in landscape and in humankind, of peculiar apprehensiveness and delicacy he added a singular capacity for expression: his brush-work was broad or exquisite at will; he could handle his materials with an accomplishment uncommon even in France, and with that touch of style which stamps the born painter. It was not long ere he began to tell in art. His health was deplorable, but he painted steadily, and from the famous *Annonciation aux bergers* (1875) he did nothing that was not closely scrutinised and eagerly discussed, and little but was applauded and admired. In 1877 he exhibited

the *Foins*, in 1878 the *André Theuriet*, in 1879 the *Sarah Bernhardt*, in 1880 the *Jeanne d'Arc*, in 1881 the *Mendiant* and the *Albert Wolff*, the *Père Jacques* in 1882, the *Amour au village* in 1883, the *Forge* in 1884; and, though he died at six-and-thirty, he had lived long enough to found a school, and to take rank with the masters of his time.

'He is not enough in love with beauty,' says the fine critic already quoted: 'he insists too much on what is ugly in Nature, he is too uncompromising in his refusal to adorn in the slightest degree the most forbidding subject'; and if the 'école réaliste-impressionniste' be visited with obloquy, that, and that only, is the reason. There is little to add to this, Bastien-Lepage is no doubt responsible for the existence, at first or second hand, of a vast amount of superfluous unbeautifulness, and for the oppression of much latter-day art—his own achievement, that is, and that of his pupils—under a heavy burden of mannerism. But he was a faithful and passionate student; his technical mastery was in a sort complete; the least lovely of his works is removed from even the suspicion of vulgarity by a curious distinction of style; he is always found to have the abiding virtue of sincerity. Alike in landscape and in portraiture he survives as the author of a new departure.

# FIVE DUTCHMEN

## I

BOSBOOM
1817

He is a painter of daylight—above all, of daylight as it were domesticated: of its appearance when it is lodged between the confines of four walls, its effect upon architectural features and the colours and the lines of furniture. His early work is only exact and literal: his subjects were mostly church interiors, which he rendered with laborious accuracy of detail and minuteness of finish. Then, having disciplined his hand and mastered his material, he became a painter: his touch grew free and bold, his drawing instinct with expression, his treatment energetic and personal, his colour refined, distinguished, and suggestive; and he began to convey in terms of exquisite sobriety his sense of the all-pervading influences of atmosphere and daylight. Working indifferently in water-colours and in oils, he attained to a singular mastery of both; and though it has not always pleased him to do well in either, and he is responsible for a great number of bad pictures, it may

be said of him that his best is unique in modern painting. None, perhaps, has had so keen and just an apprehension of the plastic quality of an interior as Johannes Bosboom ; and none has, perhaps, revealed so much of its pictorial significance, or struck from its suggestions a note of such peculiar yet engaging romance. Of course he is a development ; for is not Holland the birthplace of painted light? But he is so little the slave of his greater predecessors, of Rembrandt as of Pieter de Hooch, that he eliminates all human interest from his work. It is without reference to their relation to man, it is wholly for themselves, that he paints his cottage corners and his vast and lofty aisles. To him they are all sufficient: as the troubled skies and green meadows of his native Suffolk were to Constable, as to Corot the quiet waters and the dawning skies of Ville d'Avray. And his sole mission is to present them as he sees them through the exquisite gradations of their aërial envelope. [1888.]

## II

ISRAELS
1824

He is essentially a painter of man and man's emotions. Whatever their intrinsic merit, his landscapes and interiors are only settings for the human figure ; however justly observed and rendered, his effects of light are always subordinate to, and

illustrative of, an interest of character and sentiment. He is a good painter of popular subjects; and it is not nearly so much because he is a good painter as because his subjects are popular that his renown is world-wide, and there is scarce a gallery of modern pictures but contains an example of his work. It is to his honour—it attests the incorruptible quality of his artistic sincerity—that, with all the applause that has been his, he should have remained his own severest critic, and have gone on improving as he has gone on painting. First and last, however, his real master has been, not Kruseman nor Picot but, the magician of *The Night Watch* and the *Syndics*; and to be maintained at such height of emulation is to find rest impossible. This has been the happy fortune of Israels. His early work—a trifle violent in colour, somewhat strained in composition, in illumination arbitrary, in execution laboured and painful—is only so much unskilled and second-hand Rembrandt. But he was hard to please; and it is the practice of years that has made him the capable craftsman of his greater pictures. Here his colour is individual, spontaneous, sometimes even rich, and his brush-work large and vigorous; his drawing, if a little loose and vague—as of a Millet indifferent to Poussin and unconscious of the antique—has a quality of suggestiveness; his light is clear, fluent, impalpable, remote from paint; his shadows are

floating and luminous ; often mannered, and often naïvely naturalistic, his compositions are simply and effectively pictorial. It is small wonder if in Holland he have been a leader in the revival of painting.

He is a painter of pathos. The emotion is one easily strained ; and always to produce it aright and of the purest quality is in these days impossible. It is all-too apt to degenerate into mawkishness and twaddle ; it is subject to the taint of affectation ; when its flow is readiest and fullest, there oftentimes is its expression least to be encouraged—for to 'pipe the eye' is only now and then a creditable proceeding, and to pipe the eye on any and every provocation is to put oneself outside the pale of art, and stand forth the fit exponent of no more in nature than is feeble and contemptible. Even with Shakespeare the thing is sometimes theatrical ; even with Dickens it is often unveracious ; and for Millet, can one always acquit him of a community of aim with Édouard Frère? Israels is neither Millet nor Dickens — still less is he Shakespeare ; and his exercises in the pathetic are very often merely repellent. As a rule his appeal is all-too obvious. He makes no secret of his design upon your tears. On the contrary, he asks you to sit down and have a good cry with him ; and he tells you plainly, not only that it will do you good but, that you will really enjoy it—that you will find it a luxury

and a lesson in one. Sometimes it is impossible not to decline his invitation—not to resent it with scoffs and sneers. But on occasion his pathos is touched, both in conception and in execution, with a certain homespun dignity; and then he is irresistible. He is not a great poet like Millet: not in idea nor in utterance has he ever a touch of the heroic. But he has realised that it is man's destiny to grieve and to endure, and he often conveys this moral in terms that go straight to his hearers' hearts. [1888.]

## III

**JACOBUS MARIS**
1837-1899

At his highest he produces work that takes rank with the best of its time. He is not always a poet: the tone of what he does is commonly that of prose. But the prose (to carry on the metaphor) is master's work: it is stamped with a noble sincerity; in vigour and directness and variety it is not just now to be surpassed. In his pictures of man there is very little human interest. The figure is considered and handled much as though it were a piece of still life—in relation, that is, to its aërial envelope—and not for the sake of any intrinsic element of character or sentiment; so that the result is only pictorially good, and appeals to none save an æsthetic emotion. It is otherguess work with his landscape. Not only is it large in treatment, dignified in style, and

finely, albeit simply decorative in effect. You see at once that here the man's heart and brain are in entire and perfect consonance: he has felt as well as understood his subject, and the record is affecting as the experience was passionate. He is one of nature's intimates; and his expression of the peculiar sentiment of this or of that of her innumerable moods is scarce less just than his rendering of its special aspect is accurate. His skies are a case in point. None since Constable, the ancestor with whom to my mind he has most in common, has rendered clouds—the mass and the gait of them, the shadow and the light, the mystery and the wonder and the beauty—with such an insight into essentials, and such a command of appropriate and moving terms as Jacobus Maris. He paints them, not solid and still but, active in space, full of the daylight and the wind, menacing with storm, or charged with the benediction of the rain; and they look upon you from his canvases like the living children of the weather that they are. [1888.]

## IV

**MAUVE**
1838-1888

Mauve may not be ranked with Troyon. He is much less vigorous and less original; he is not nearly so great a painter; his work is not so solid in execution nor so decorative in effect. On the other hand his draughtsmanship is sound, his brush-

work full of gusto, his colour quite his own; to a right sense of nature and a mastery of certain atmospheric effects he unites a genuine strain of poetry. In pure landscape he is often excellent: he paints it with a taking combination of knowledge and feeling. His treatment of animals is at once judicious and affectionate. He is careful to render them in relation to their aërial surroundings; but he has recognised that they too are creatures of character and sentiment, and he loves to paint them in their relations to each other and to man. The sentiment is never forced, the characterisation never strained, the drama never exorbitant: the proportions in which they are introduced are so nicely adjusted that the pictorial, the purely artistic, quality of the work is undiminished. To Troyon animals were objects in a landscape; to Mauve they are that and something more. His old horses are their old masters' friends; his cows are used to the girls who tend them; his sheep feed as though they knew each other, and liked it. In a word, his use of the dramatic element is primarily artistic; and it is with something of a blush that one compares his *savoir-vivre* with the bad manners of some animal painters nearer home. [1888.]

## V

MATTHYS MARIS

1839

Matthew Maris is an artist of rare parts and singular accomplishment, averse from publicity and contemptuous of distinction, and content to paint for himself and a few friends. He mastered his craft almost at starting; and his earliest work is distinguished by sanity of aim and completeness of method. But it is not in his earliest work that he can be rightly savoured. He has in him a vein of poetry, a strain of imagination, that is none the less intense for being somewhat morbid; and he was quick to part company with solid earth, and to become a painter of dreams. He is far less concerned with the outward show of things than with their spiritual shapes, their attribute of mystery, their essence and innate significance; and he expresses as much of these as is revealed to him in terms of strange and peculiar beauty. His view of life is melancholy; his sympathies are curiously individual and remote; his humanity is warped, fantastic; his romance, for all the close and brooding passion of its expression, is so uncommon as to appear unreal. But he has a magic of his own, and to withstand his incantations is impossible. Their appeal is vague as that in certain of Heine's verses:—

Aus alten Märchen winkt es
Hervor mit weisser Hand,
Da singt es und da klingt es
Von einem Zauberland:—

and withal as curiously affecting. I do not want to strain the comparison. Heine is the most human of poets; Matthew Maris is one of the least sexual of painters. But I own that to me the Dutchman's pictures are now and then inevitably suggestive of the more fantastic and far-away of the greater artist's lyrics. They might almost pass for illustrations of certain pages in the *Buch der Lieder*, just as certain pages in the *Buch der Lieder* recall to me with no uncertain voice the unearthly glamour, 'the light that never was on sea or land,' which shimmers from so much of the painter's work. Here is an instance of what I mean:—

Im Zaubergarten wallen
Zwei Buhlen stumm und allein,
Es singen die Nachtigallen,
Es flimmert der Mondenschein.

That, with what follows, is a Matthew Maris in words.

Israels has described his art as 'the fine gold of Dutch painting'; and, being that, it will always be caviare to the general. It may be, indeed, that the half of him will not be told to us; for his life is spent in the pursuit of unattainable perfections, and he regards the most of those pictures which he consents to part with as no

more than experiments. Be this as it may, they are good enough for them that have eyes to see. If they proved no more, they would still prove that two great and precious qualities are indisputably his. He has a gift of exquisite colour and an infallible sense of tone. Of late the former potency has suffered change: his reveries have grown sombre and sad; he has done with his weird yet lovely combinations of magical blue and ethereal gold; he paints, not dreams but, the melancholy ghosts of dreams. But his tonality is always faultless; and those, perhaps, who have caught the full perfume of his subtle and peculiar genius will find new charm in his darkening mood. [1888.]

# SOME LANDSCAPE PAINTERS

## I

NASMYTH
1758-1840

Nasmyth's reputation has greatly declined of late; and the reasons are neither few nor far to seek. He had a sincere and pleasant sense of the pastoral in landscape; he was an ardent and intelligent student of the Dutch masters, and he put such individuality as he had into the convention which they had shaped to such lovely ends; he was something of an Eighteenth Century poet, and his liking for beauty, pedestrian as it was, had yet a reality of life that is still palpable, and a capacity for respectable and decent expression that has admirers even now. But, as he was essentially small in his ambitions, so was he essentially petty in his triumphs. What he had to say amounts to nothing in particular; and, while explicit and studied enough to satisfy the needs of a certain sort of literalism, the terms in which he said it are cold, formal, altogether wanting in distinction. His matter, in other words, is merely commonplace, and his manner, hard, 'tight,' niggled enough to be inspiring to none save the careful student of facts.

## II

TURNER
1775-1851

The last years of Turner's life were a strange and sordid mingling of dotage and uncleanness. In 1842 he exhibited his *Burial of Sir David Wilkie* and *The Exile and the Rock Limpet*, in 1843 his *Approach to Venice* and his *Sun of Venice going to Sea*, in 1844 the extraordinary piece of *impressionnisme* known as *Rain, Speed, and Steam*. To some these last works of his are revelations of new possibilities in art, while to others they are only the outcome of a mind diseased and the expression of a colour-faculty gone to physical decay and ruin. But, whatever the fact in art, in life the Turner of these squalid last years was a dismal monomaniac. He had a house in Queen Anne Street (for the pictures contained in which he was offered, and refused, an hundred thousand pounds), and that house was kept by a woman who had begun to live with him in 1801 as a girl of sixteen, and had gone on living with him ever since; but though she knew of another retreat of his, she had no idea where it was, and it was not until late in 1851 that she was able to identify her master with a certain 'Puggy Booth,' who was thought to be a retired Admiral (Turner had already been known to pass himself off as a Master in Chancery) who had a house in Chelsea, and

lived there with an old woman whose face was hideous with cancer. He died there some days after the identification. His will, which he had made himself, was a monument of muddled inexpressiveness. It was the subject of years of argument; but in the end it gave his pictures and drawings to the nation, a sum of £20,000 to the Royal Academy, and the bulk of his funded moneys, together with his rights in engravings, to his next of kin.

His life—so voiceless and so stunted in fact, so gross and unworthy in appearance—has not yet found its Balzac. His art, so intelligent, so apprehensive, so ambitious in its aims, so confused yet so suggestive in its results—has been the origin of so much literature that to admit that it is art at all is getting difficult, and to assert that it is not only art but great art has become wellnigh impossible. Turner, indeed, belongs at this time neither to hell nor to heaven, but hangs, like Mahomet's coffin somewhere—nobody knows in what degree of altitude—between the empyrean and the abyss. On the one hand is Mr. Ruskin with the great army of those who think with him; and for them Turner not only resumes the excellences of Claude, the Poussins, Ruysdael, Rembrandt, Rubens, Wilson, Crome, Van de Velde, Gainsborough, Constable, but is also Turner, and so the last potentiality—'the ultimate and consummate flower'—of landscape. On the other is the little but in-

creasing group which demands of an artist not personality but art, not experiment but achievement, not riot but order, not excess but measure, quality, perfection — not Turner and Rousseau but Claude and Corot — and sees in him a man whose genius, to put it metaphorically, lived in a castle with a score of posterns and no great gateway. To strike and hold the balance between the two factions is impossible. Turner has been so magnificently over-praised that, as was inevitable, he is just now — he will be for some time to come — the breaking-point of a great wave of reaction. Till that wave has exhausted its energy the very truth is only to be caught in splashes. Thus it is certain, as Mr. Monkhouse has shown, that Turner's life was lived in a series of duels in paint with other men: that in water-colours he studied, assimilated, and improved upon the practice of the best of his time; that in oils he set himself to understand, repeat, and do better than the best of De Loutherbourg, Wilson, Van de Velde, Titian, the Poussins, Claude, to name but these. But it is by no means so certain that, as Mr. Monkhouse would have us believe, he succeeded. It is nothing if not doubtful that his colour-sense was ever anything but crude, antic, and a little coarse. But his ingenuity was enormous; his interest in facts is scarce to be described; his dexterity — in water-colours anyhow — has yet to be surpassed; his treatment of Nature —

with its extraordinary and bewildering combination of an artistic yet arbitrary regard for ideals of composition and an inartistic and slavish regard for superfluous detail—was personal, to say the least; he drew with uncommon neatness and precision, he was curious in styles, he touched upon a thousand hints of mystery and beauty and romance. And the result for him that is enamoured of art—who looks upon paint as so much visible beauty, and is not concerned with its moral significance or its unpictorial suggestiveness; who sees that Turner's blues are shrewd, and his yellows trumpery; and who is mad and wicked enough to judge of the literary quality of (say) *The Exile and the Rock Limpet* by that of *The Fallacies of Hope*—the result, I say, is rather negative. That Turner was a great artist *A Frosty Morning*, among other things, remains to show. That he was ever a great colourist is matter of opinion: the facts are with us that latterly he grew colour-blind, and that, when it comes to swearing, the sensation of the expert in paint is every whit as authoritative as the practical testimony of the painter. That he has not entirely obliterated the memory of Claude is plain to any one who can clear his mind of rhetoric, and compare the two where they hang (as Turner intended they should hang) in the National Gallery. However correct it be to advance that he was the source of a vast amount of art-criticism, it is uncritical to affirm that he

founded a school in painting, or that his influence upon his successors has been comparable in any sense to that which is still being exercised by Constable and by Crome. But it is none the less true that, while on the Continent he is not greatly esteemed, among Ruskin-reading populations he is a kind of superstition, and commands higher prices than any save those among his successors who are the most in fashion. Also, his worst enemy has been the wonderful man of letters whose inspiration he was in the beginning, and whose care his fame has continued to be. There is no such deadly influence as excess of praise; and that Turner has survived the enthusiasm of Mr. Ruskin is excellent argument for his greatness.

## III

CONSTABLE
1776-1837

Constable, the most influential, and one of the greatest, landscape-painters of the Nineteenth Century, was born at East Bergholt, where his father, Golding Constable, a wealthy mill-owner, resided. He was intended for the Church, and went to school at Lavenham and Dedham and elsewhere; but he was distinguished in nothing save 'proficiency in handwriting' till late in his 'teens, when, says Leslie, he was found to have become 'devotedly fond of painting.' Golding Constable would seem to have

divined the future, he was so resolutely intolerant of the unkindly and fatal passion; and his son, whose only friend was the village plumber (with whom he used to go out sketching from Nature), and who was obliged to hire a room that he might have a place to paint in, was presently obliged to compromise, and, having finally declined to become a parson, to take his place in one or other of his father's mills. It was the best he could have done. It was part of his business to watch the weather; and that he became the greatest observer of wind and cloud and rain yet known in painting was due in no small means to this fortunate piece of tyranny.

At this time Sir George Beaumont — Wordsworth's Beaumont: Beaumont of the brown tree— was a frequent visitor to Dedham, which was his mother's home. The Dowager-Lady Beaumont and Mrs. Constable were friends; and at the elder lady's house John Constable was taken with one of the great passions—after nature and himself perhaps the greatest—of his life. Sir George was not a great painter; but, as his bequests to the National Gallery will show, he had an admirable taste in pictures. Devoted, above all, to Claude and Wilson, he was accustomed to carry the *Hagar* of the former master about with him wherever he went, and, in making his acquaintance, Constable made that of the prince of landscape-painters as well. His taste in landscape, it is to be noted,

was largely classic: he was an ardent and devoted admirer of Titian, the Poussins, Wilson, and his highest enthusiasm was for Claude. 'How enchanting,' he writes (of the *Narcissus*), 'and lovely it is; far, very far surpassing any other landscape I ever beheld.' He was then at Cole-Orton, as Sir George's guest: he had gone there to copy his favourite painter, and he worked so hard as to impair his health. 'I do not wonder,' he cries to his wife, in a rapture that makes him careless of grammar, 'at your being jealous of Claude; if anything could come between our love, it is *him*'; and, again, a few lines later, he bursts out with 'the Claudes, the Claudes, the Claudes, are all, all I can think of here.' This (and more to the same purpose) was written some five-and-thirty years after that first sight of the *Narcissus*, which, says Leslie, 'he always regarded as an important epoch in his life.' It is fair to add that, with Sir George's Claudes, he saw Sir George's Girtins, a set of thirty water-colours, which he was advised to study as 'examples of great breadth and truth,' and whose influence, Leslie thinks, 'may be more or less traced through the whole course of his practice.' Nothing like this can be said of the Claudes. Unlike Turner, whose enthusiasm was nothing if not imitative, Constable remained himself, and to achieve the marriage of the new art with the old was reserved for one later and greater.

His first visit to London was in 1795. He had a letter of introduction to Farrington (1747-1821), who looked at his work, predicted his greatness, and told him what he knew of the practice of his own master, Richard Wilson; and he made the acquaintance of 'Antiquity Smith' (1766-1838), the author, antiquary, draughtsman, and engraver, from whom he received much valuable counsel and encouragement. The next year he was settled again at Bergholt, reading Algarotti and Leonardo and Gessner, copying 'Tempesta's large battle,' painting *A Chymist* and *An Alchymist*—'for which I am chiefly indebted to our immortal bard'—drawing cottages for Smith to engrave, making flying visits to London, working between-whiles in his father's counting-house; and in the February of 1797 he was admitted a student of the Royal Academy, and, says Leslie, 'had resumed his pencil not to lay it aside.' After that you find him making elaborate studies from the living model and from anatomical sections; copying Wilson, Ruysdael, Carracci, and Claude; sketching at Ipswich—where 'I fancy I see Gainsborough in every hedge and hollow tree'—in Derbyshire, and 'among the oaks and solitudes of Helmingham Park'; and painting, in utter scorn of the 'cold trumpery stuff' he saw being done about him, to please himself, until in 1802 he broke ground, with a *Landscape* at the Royal Academy. The most useful of his friends was

Benjamin West (1738-1820), who encouraged him generously and well; persuaded him to refuse a drawing-master's place, which Dr. Fisher (afterwards Bishop of Salisbury) had offered him, and depend entirely upon himself; and gave him a great deal of excellent advice, some of which—as, for example, the hint to remember that 'light and shadow never stand still'—he adopted, and some of which—as, for example, the precept that 'whatever object he was painting,' he should 'keep in mind its prevailing character rather than its accidental appearance'—he forgot more frequently than was good for him. For the rest, he had convinced himself that there was '*room enough for a natural painter*' (the italics are his own), had decided that 'truth only will last, and can only have just claims on posterity,' and had determined to cease from 'running after pictures and seeking the truth at second hand'; so that he had fairly begun his course, and shaped his destiny.

Both were uneventful enough. He sailed to Deal in an East-Indiaman, and used the experience in a picture (1806) of *H.M.S. 'Victory' in the Battle of Trafalgar*; he went sketching in the Lake District, and turned the results to some account in the exhibitions, but found that the solitude of mountains depressed his spirits; he painted some portraits, a couple of altar-pieces for Brantham and Nayland Churches, a great number of copies (chiefly Sir Joshuas) for the Earl of

Dysart; he married, after years and years of probation, and was quietly happy in his wife and children; he exhibited constantly and to such purpose that in 1822—when he had been three years an Associate, and was known as the painter of *The White Horse* (1819), the *Stratford Mill* (1820), and *The Hay Wain* (1821), to name but these—he is found asking his friend Archdeacon Fisher for the loan of £20 or £30. His prices were small enough, for he was glad to take £100 apiece for *The White Horse* and the *Stratford Mill*, which were both six-foot canvases, the first he ever painted; for his famous and excellent *Boat passing a Lock* (1824) he got but a hundred and fifty guineas 'including the frame'; and he was content, after some haggling, to sell *The Hay Wain* and *A Lock on the Stour* for £250 the pair, and to give the purchaser, a Frenchman, 'a small picture of *Yarmouth* into the bargain.' This was the most profitable sale he ever made. For the purchaser exhibited his purchase at the memorable Salon of 1824; and Constable awoke to find himself the most famous Englishman in all the history of French art.[1]

[1] For the results of his appearance see *ante*, pp. 36-39. This was his highest moment, and, so far as I know, he did not profit by it in England. He died, indeed, in 1837, and Ruskin, bent on winning the world for Turner, ran amok at Constable, as he had run amok at Claude. The effect of his unscrupulous, adroit, and most ingenious ecstasy was that we had to suffer Rossetti, and to read our

## IV

COTMAN
1782-1842

The year after Cotman's death, his effects were sold at Christie's: most of his drawings went for a few shillings apiece, and the top prices of a two-days' sale — which produced the beggarly total of £262, 14s.—were £6, and £8, 16s. Since then times and tastes have changed; and Cotman has long been recognised, as his biographer remarks, for 'one of the most original and versatile artists of the first half of this century,' a draughtsman and colourist of exceptional gifts, a water-colourist worthy to be ranked among the greater men, and excellent whether as a painter of land or sea. Indeed, he was a rarely endowed and, whatever his medium, completely accomplished artist. In etching, for example, he drew his inspiration from the overpowering achievement

Constable, as the rest of the world had read him, in a French translation. Now Ruskin is gone: 'The sweet war-man is dead and rotten': and one can admire as one will, so that even Mr. Whistler is somebody, and a Nicholson (say) is not to be put out of court because it is not like something else—a Fra Angelico, for instance, or a Carpaccio, or a Tintoret. On the whole, we have had our fill (and more than our fill) of *Modern Painters*. 'Twas an irresistible book in its time. But Turner is pretty much where he would have been had it never been written. So, too, are Constable and the others—the unworthy, the obscene, the jugulated—Van Dyck, and Rembrandt, and Gaspar Poussin; and that is, or should be, enough. [1901.]

of Gianbattista Piranesi, and if he had nothing of the grandiose imagination and the sense of mystery and romance which give to that master a place apart among those who have treated the results of architecture as material for art, he is also found to be lacking in the trick of emphasis, the tendency to exaggerate, disfeature, and misreport, by which the Venetian's work is often vitiated, and which make him so redoubtable a model. It is the same with him in water-colours and in oils. His master-quality is a capacity for simplification and selection. It was a maxim with him to 'leave out, but add nothing,' and he practised his theory with an assurance of hand and an intelligence of eye that stamp him, in this respect at least, a true and excellent artist. No doubt he would have done better had he attempted less and laboured in fewer fields; but, even so, his best work is lifted into greatness by the presence of a manly and sincere imagination tempered with style.

## V

DAVID COX
1783-1859

Cox was a patient and faithful student of Nature, and particularly of certain essential facts in Nature: as the action of light, the effect of wind and rain and mist, the shape and the motion of clouds, the variable and affecting quality of atmosphere; and the best of his achievement—simple, direct,

sincere—is an individual reflection of much that but for him might have gone unrecorded. As it seems to some, he is least attractive and convincing when he is most elaborate; for then his work is apt to set forth far too much of his personal idiosyncrasy (on the whole 'tis tame and commonplace), and to be greatly wanting in the freshness and spontaneity of his transcripts from the living fact. Naturally, his admirers are numerous and ardent, and to those not with them his reputation appears exaggerated.

## VI

WILLIAMS
1783-1829

He was not original nor powerful; but he was always 'Grecian Williams' and an exponent of the classic convention in landscape. This is to say that he composed with elegance, drew with correctness, and was judicious in selection, tranquil in sentiment, and graceful in effect. His taste was in every sense refined; his colour has but to be unaltered to be pleasing; his work, though its interest is largely archæological, is always reminiscent of style. He reminds one of a writer of sonnets with nothing particular to say and with a fine understanding of how things may and should be said. It is well for him and his like in art to be suckled in a creed outworn, and ill to be born into a faith

whose dogmas are not yet disengaged, and whose very formulas are still to find. Posterity is interested in the experiments of none but the very greatest: as Rubens, Titian, Velasquez, Rembrandt van Ryn. What it demands of the others is, not the proof that they concerned themselves with the solution of problems, which they had not begun to comprehend, but, the proof that they understood and attempted a certain established and consummate mode. Grecian Williams, with all those who are faithful to a convention, remains respectable in despite of change; and that is the reason why.

## VII

**DE WINT**
1784-1849

The De Wints were Dutch and Dutch-Americans; but a branch of them crossed the Atlantic to settle in England, and Peter De Wint was born at Stone, in Staffordshire, where his father practised as a physician. In 1802 he was apprenticed to Raphael Smith, the engraver and portrait-painter, with whom he remained four years. In 1807 he began to exhibit; in 1809 he entered the Royal Academy Schools; in 1810 he married a sister of William Hilton (Hilton married a sister of De Wint), and joined the Society of Painters in Water Colours; in 1812 he became a member of the same Society; he had many friends and patrons, was a popular

drawing-master, painted continually in the open air, exhibited until the end, got little for his drawings, and died (at sixty-five) of heart disease. That is all there is to tell.

He painted excellently in oils, and it is beginning to be suspected that he is, perhaps, the chief of English water-colourists. His drawing is expressive and sound, his colour rich, luminous, and decorative; his brushwork has distinction as well as vigour and facility; largely massed, and elegant in line, his compositions have that quality of completeness which is one of the signs of art; his treatment of light and air is both subtle and broad; in his work the manliest sincerity and directness are found in union with an even delicacy of insight and a simple magic of effect. Fortunately for us all, he was a painter pure and simple, from whose work the literary element is absent, whose merits are merely pictorial, and with whose pre-eminency (such as it is) the rhapsodist has nothing to do.

## VIII

LINNELL'S reputation was at one time overpowering, but the grounds of it are hard to distinguish. He was, no doubt, a sturdy student of Nature; and he had, no doubt, a strenuous and rugged solemnity of purpose, of which his work was a sincere, if

LINNELL
1792-1882

halting, expression. But his colour, with its coarse purples and its garish reds and greens, is painfully hot and vicious; his mastery of paint is never conspicuous save in absence; his handling, for all its air of bravura, is niggled and small enough to be oddly at variance with the vague of his ambitions and the passionate melodrama of his ideas. His diligent hand was altogether at odds with his labouring brain, and it is doubtful if in the range of British art there is any achievement in which the quality of paintiness is so violently apparent as in his. A typical Linnell is enough to show that, well as he meant and vigorous as was his temperament, the outcome of such endowments as his is ever a negation of art.

## IX

**MÜLLER**
1812-1845

In 1846 this man's pictorial remains were sold by auction, and, the Public having awakened to the fact that he had been one of the foremost landscape painters of the time, his executors cleared some £4600 by the sale. All the same, it is like enough that he had not attained to anything like his highest; and it is certain that he was largely gifted and finely accomplished. He painted and drew with equal vigour and facility, and, as his faculty of composition was both well-bred and well-trained, and his pictorial invention of singular

readiness and fertility, he produced as much in the few years that it was given him to live as many men of twice his age. At his best his colour is full, rich, personal, alive; his pictorial quality is excellent in kind and overpowering in degree; he produces an effect of strength and of completeness—of personality in union with style—which few Englishmen have had in them to surpass.

## X

**SAM BOUGH**
1822-1878

The best of Bough was Bough himself; and of the humour, the temperament, the independence of mind, the buxom and jovial sincerity that went to make that up, there is not too much in his work. His chief oil pictures are the Cadzow Forest scenes, the *Dumbarton*, the *Baggage Waggons* (a reminiscence of Müller), the *Rocket Cart*, the *St. Monance*, the *Borrowdale*, the *Edinburgh*, the *Holy Island*, the *Mail Coach entering Carlisle*, the *Kirkwall Harbour*, and the *London from Shooter's Hill*. They are big, bold, 'scenic' work, and, at least as effects in pictorial histrionics —for Bough was nothing if not 'theatrical'—their interest is considerable. It is on his water-colours, however, that his renown is stablished. They have a tenderness and a fulness of expression which he never compassed in the other medium.

His skies are very often good, and in his renderings of wind and motion he captured and paraded not a little of the feeling and the energy of several greater men. Again, he was eminently versatile: all aspects of Nature were familiar to him; marine, or pastoral, or sylvan, he had an eye for whatever would paint, and, in water-colour at least, a real gusto of expression. His work abounds in commonplaces; he was too often enamoured of the superficial. But, on the whole, his art is vigorous, healthy, frequently agreeable, and sometimes better than any but the best.

## XI

**CECIL LAWSON** 1851-1882

Whether Lawson had or had not said his last word remains uncertain. What is not doubtful is that he was a born painter, with a vigorous and sterling gift of expression. Within the limits of an intense, if rather narrow, scheme of green and blue he was a true, though not a distinguished, colourist; and his best work is marked by breadth of vision and largeness of treatment, and therewith a real sense of style. His inspiration was frankly Flemish: he was a pupil of Rubens, and the convention to which he chose to adapt his ideas was chiefly modelled on his master's. It follows that his painting, whatever its defects, and however near

it be to failure, is always positively artistic, and that his relations with Nature are characterised by a certain reticence and good breeding. Facts are never the end with him—they are only the means: he refrains from the vulgarity of realisation, and essays no more than the pictorial expression of certain balanced and choice suggestions. His handling is often not less solid than dexterous; in his victories, as in his defeats, he remains a painter. It is possible that, had he lived, he would have made his convention popular and intelligible, and founded a school with higher aims than experiment and a better ambition than that of being merely representative.

## XII

THOMSON OF DUDDINGSTON
1778-1840

He is described as an 'amateur,' and in a sense the description is descriptive enough; but amateurs of Thomson's stamp are as rare as great artists, from which, when they are found, they are not easily distinguished. Thomson, indeed, is comparatively the greatest Scots landscape-painter. What is more, his place in British art is eminent as well as peculiar. His technical practice could be faulty on occasion, but at its best it is sound in method and brilliant in effect. His colour is often of remarkable significance and

beauty. His pictorial faculty was so sane in kind and so vigorous in quality as to be almost infallible: it was as a painter that he looked at fact; it was as a painter that he received, selected, and arranged his impressions; it was as a painter that he formulated his conclusions, recorded his results, and produced his effects. For not only was he a devout and ardent student of Nature: he was also an innamorate of art, and especially of art as understood and practised by the great men of the great landscape school of Rome. It is told of him that he was an immense admirer of Turner, but I do not think it easy to gather that much from his works. Before the Englishman's ambitions and effects, however dazzling they may have seemed to him and however closely he may have cherished them, he preferred the ideals and the achievements of the Poussins and of Claude. And the fact remains that his best, while profoundly romantic in temper, is large in treatment and dignified in aim, and is touched throughout with the supreme distinction of style: is, in truth, a lasting demonstration of the uses of convention and an eloquent reproof to them that asseverate that art is individual or is nothing.

# FOUR PORTRAIT PAINTERS

## I

Sir Joshua painted men and women and children with equal distinction, understanding, and effect; and he remains the completest artist, and perhaps the greatest painter, that Britain has yet produced. No doubt there have been men whose intelligence was more curious and more apprehensive; and it may be there are some who have done brush-work as close to fact and as eloquent according to the conditions and the rules of paint. But none, whether in portraiture or landscape, has maintained so lofty and so imperturbable a level of excellence, or shown so constant and so exquisite a respect for dignity of style. It is the fashion to talk of Turner as of one divinely inspired, of Gainsborough as being magnetic, infallible, irresistible, of others to similar purpose, each after his kind; and in a sense the fashion is right. We English have always regarded art as nothing if not personal, and have valued our artists not according

REYNOLDS
1723-1792

to their places in the hierarchy of paint, but according as we found them interesting, mysterious, engaging, and the like; and the result has been that, even as we have devoured, with an appetite for whose intrepidity no praise can be too great, such crude imaginings and half-phrased ideas as the work of Blake and Rossetti (to name but these), we have contrived by the operation of a peculiar mental process—an effect partly of culture and partly of native worth—to get ourselves into such a condition of taste as makes the denial of Sir Joshua's pre-eminency rather meritorious than not. But it is not Sir Joshua who suffers: it is ourselves. He was, it is true, above all things the exponent of a mere convention; and before that the English mind—fed full of the immense suggestiveness of Turner, and made drunken with the nepenthe of Turner's chief prophet—is only too apt to prefer such strange gods as mystery, romance, individuality, and the rest of them. But it is none the less true that Sir Joshua, whatever his place in the art of Britain, is a far more brilliant and conspicuous figure in the art of the world than any Englishman before or since his time. It is a commonplace that he had design, colour, the capacity of brushwork, the pictorial sense, the genius of characterisation, the perfection of good breeding, the charm of a distinguished style, and therewith the touch that brings such artists as Thackeray to his feet

and constrains such sturdy, hobnailed Muses as Wordsworth's to take up their testimony against him. It is a commonplace, too, that he was sometimes mannered, and on occasion could be feeble; that he carried his interest in his material to a point at which he wilfully sacrificed the future to the present, and expressed himself in terms which he probably knew would not endure the touch of time; that he was 'courtly,' prone to please, addicted to flattery, very conscious of the merits of Sir Joshua Reynolds. What is of vital importance is that he was so complete a master of a certain noble, and withal a most imperious, convention that he challenges comparison to those whose invention and achievement it was, and whose merit it remains, to have expressed themselves to immortal purpose within its limits and in obedience to its rules. The pedants pass—they and their catalogues with them; the literary critic of art dies of his own literature; the fashions, the airs and graces, of inspiration change, flourish, and are forgotten almost with the hour. But for Sir Joshua there is no vanishing, nor death, nor change. He had the supreme good sense to recognise that Raphael, Titian, Van Dyck were his masters, and that as their pupil he was greater than everybody save themselves.

## II

GAINSBOROUGH 1727-1788

Gainsborough is as brilliant and fascinating a personality as exists in English art. He was the kindest, the waywardest, the most passionate of men: 'a natural gentleman,' says Northcote; a fanatic of music and a romantic lover of musical instruments; curious of novelty, greedy of experience; with more interests than he could manage, more ambitions than he could gratify, more temperament than he could adequately express. His achievement, alike in portraiture and landscape, is large, and the quality of much is very good. But it includes some elements of imperfectness which are as the seeds of death. His training was incomplete; his accomplishment was never consummate; his colour, for all its charm, is thin—is as of Watteau without richness and without lambency and glow; his brushwork, for all its ease and spontaneity and suggestiveness, too often produces an impression which may be likened to the effect of painted china; his work is too frequently experimental or capricious. There is in him something of the amateur; and it is impossible not to feel that his art is not fully representative of his admirable native gift. He had a rare facility of hand; he was inventive, ingenious, even imaginative, and he was so in his own way, with a mixture of sincerity and grace that is

very winning; in landscape he touched at times a note of natural and peculiar romance. But it is vain to deny that his possibilities were greater than his performance, and that to equal him with so great a master of style as Reynolds is to ignore the very essentials of art.

## III

ROMNEY
1734-1802

The dominant in Romney's life is a note of sexual tragedy. The worship in paint which he professed for Emma Lyon is comparable of its kind and in its degree to that which Dante practised for Beatrice in poetry. That he was not materially her lover is suggested by the fact that he never tired of painting her. The triumphing male does not commonly disperse his energies in celebrating the peculiarities of his conquest. There have been examples to the contrary, of course; but good taste, good feeling, the instinct of sex, the necessities of art, are generally on the other side, and for one such outcry of full-fed satisfaction as (say) Rossetti's *Nuptial Sleep* (which may or may not be genuine), there are a thousand such voicings of mere desire as (say) *Adelaide* and Romney's 'Lady Hamilton' *passim*. In any case Romney's place in British art is not with the highest. He had grace, invention, facility; above

all, he had, and still has, charm; but if he were a type of the artistic temperament, there is scarce any sense in which he can be said to have been an artist, and even at its best his work is found to be more or less of an *à peu près*—a something which is only almost done, and to be enjoyed must be approached and considered with certain touches of the child's humour of makebelieve. In portraiture he is sometimes very nearly good; as a dabbler in pictorial romance he was responsible for many attempts at doing something not then to be done. But he was —as Nelson was—a man with a passion, and his condition remains the more fortunate. The nation greatly honoured the hero who did its work at the Nile and Copenhagen and Trafalgar. And it seems to have decided to regard in something of the same spirit the man who, dimly seeing and imperfectly showing the existence of new possibilities in art, yet painted one woman in such a way that he chiefly lives as that one woman's painter.

## IV

RAEBURN
1756-1823

The material Raeburn found in his native place was of the finest quality. The blessing of the Union was everywhere apparent, but Scotland was not yet Anglicized, and Edinburgh was still her capital in fact as well as in name. As the

city at once of Walter Scott and of the Great Unknown, it was a metropolis of poetry and fiction; as the city of Jeffrey and *Maga*, it was a centre of so-called criticism; as the city of Raeburn and John Thomson, it was a high place of portraiture and landscape; as the city of Archibald Constable and the Ballantynes, it was a headquarters of bookselling and printing. It was the city of Reid and Dugald Stewart, of Erskine and Henry Dundas, of John Home and Henry Mackenzie, of Braxfield and Newton and Clerk of Eldin, of Francis Horner and Neil Gow; and as Raeburn painted the most of these—and indeed there was scarce an eminent Scotsman but sat to him—his achievement may be said to mirror some thirty years of the Scots nation's life. Scarce anywhere could he have found better models; which, for their part, were thrice fortunate in their painter. Honourable as were his beginnings, they scarce gave earnest of the results of his later years. His genius, essentially symmetrical and sane, did but mature with time; artistic from the first, his accomplishment was finest at his death; his vision was at its keenest in his latest efforts; his life, in fine, was a piece of work as sound and healthy and manly as his art. Thus: 'he is said to have lost a great deal of money by becoming security for a relative, but he bore his loss with great composure, and painted no more industriously after than before'; he spent much of his leisure in

'mechanics and natural philosophy'; he practised sculpture—it is said that when he was studying under Michelangelo in Rome, he came near to preferring it before painting—with a certain diligence; he 'excelled,' says his biographer 'at archery, golf, and other Scottish exercises'; he laid out and built 'on so judicious and tasteful a plan' that his estate became in no great while 'the most extensive suburb attached to Edinburgh'; he was an excellent talker; he appears to have been singularly fortunate in his domestic relations; he enjoyed the friendship as he commanded the admiration of the most distinguished men of his time; his health was perfect; he stood upwards of six feet two in his boots; 'it may be added that, while engaged in painting, his step and attitudes were at once stately and graceful.' His character and his career, indeed, have all the balance, the unity, the symmetrical completeness, of his genius and his achievement; and the rhythm to which they moved—large, dignified, consummate: like that of a Handelian chorus—remained unbroken until the end. It came in 1823. He was now a man of sixty-seven; his health was apparently imperturbable; with Scott and Adam and Shepherd, he had been for some years in the habit of 'interposing a parenthesis into the chapter of public business for the purpose of visiting objects of historical interest and curiosity'; and this year he had not only 'visited

with enthusiasm the ancient ruins of St. Andrews, of Pittenweem, and other remains of antiquity,' but had also 'contributed much to the hilarity of the party.' Returning to Edinburgh, he had been honoured with a sitting from Sir Walter, of whom he was anxious to finish two presentments, one for himself and one for Lord Montagu; and 'within a day or two afterwards' he was 'suddenly affected with a general decay and debility,'—a condition 'not accompanied by any visible complaint.' He lingered no more than a week; and so it befell that the portrait of the author of *Waverley* was the last to make any call upon a capacity of brain and hand unequalled in that owner's day. Thus does Scotland work: she has the genius of fitness, so that to the world without her achievement seems ever instinct with the very spirit of romance. There are two great artists in the Edinburgh of 1823, and the one dies painting the other (the fact remains 'a subject of affectionate regret' to the survivor). I think of Hugo—of the *Je crois en Dieu* of his last will and testament, his careful provision of a pauper's hearse. And I revert with pride and gratitude to the supreme experience of this august pair of friends.

There is often virtue in a nickname; and much as Jameson is still renowned as the Scottish Van Dyck, even so, but with greater propriety, might Raeburn—who used neither compasses nor chalks, dealt with his sitters directly through the

medium of paint, and was identified with the use of the 'square' touch at least a couple of generations before its present apotheosis—be distinguished as the Scots Velasquez. It is told that when Wilkie was painting in the Muséo del Prado, he had but to consider the work of the Spaniard to be 'always reminded' of the Scot's; and it is a fact that the one has at least some tincture of the breadth of manner, the unity of effect, the quick, inevitable touch, the notable capacity for preferring essentials—something, too, of the turn for perfect prose as opposed to high romantic poetry —which are present to so marvellous a purpose in the other. But these comparisons of less to greater are misleading; and it were well to push the parallel no further. The interest of art is absolutely incompatible with the sentiment of patriotism; and it is enough to know that Raeburn, whatever his degree of kinship to the king of painters, was an excellent and distinguished artist in paint. He came at the break between old and new—when the old was not yet discredited, and the new was still inoffensive; and with that exquisite good sense which marks the artist, he identified himself with that which was known, and not with that which, though big with many kinds of possibilities, was as yet in perfect touch with nothing actively alive. His draughtsmanship was good enough when he chose; his colour was sound enough

to be distinguished; sober as it may seem, his feeling for paint was very real; his brush-work—intelligent, vigorous, expressive—was that of a man of choice and forceful temperament trained in the ways and nourished upon the conventions of a great school. And with all this he was Henry Raeburn—a personality so shrewd and sensible, so natural and healthy and sincere, as to seem not out of place in the cycle of Walter Scott. He was content to paint that he knew, and that only; and his conscience was serviceable, as well as untroubled and serene. Of the mere capacity for portraiture—the gift of perceiving and representing individual character and form—he had more, perhaps, than any portrait painter that has lived; and not a little of his merit consists in that he was always so far its master as to be able to vocalise it (as it were) in the terms of paint, so that his portraitures are, to begin with, pictures. Here, if you will, are facts; but here, unmistakably, is paint, is accomplishment, is art. And that is why a bad Raeburn is better than the best of men like Shee and Grant. That is why a good one might be compared without much suffering or offence to a good Sir Joshua: the truth being that Sir Henry at his strongest need hardly vail his bonnet to the best that have painted the living aspects of men. A gentleman is company for the king. [1890.]

# ARTISTS AND AMATEURS

## I

GEORGE MORLAND
1763-1804

He was born in London, where at four he is said to have been taught in West's *atelier*, while at ten he was an expert in certain branches of anatomy, at twelve he could model ships, and at eighteen he taught himself the fiddle. Meanwhile his father, to whom he had been bound apprentice, had put him through a course of discipline severe enough to make a right painter of him. He was long imprisoned with a series of casts from the antique, and when he had mastered these, he was turned on to copy pictures, which Henry Robert Morland, always at his wits' end for money, sold as fast as they were done, to the Jews. George, in fact, was born into a world of thriftlessness and dishonourable expediency, and it was inevitable that, with the blood and the training which were his, he should have turned out the rather ruffianly Bohemian we know.

It is said that even at the height of his captivity he used to cheat his father and make money for

himself: that he found time in the day to paint a great deal of stuff, which at night he used to lower from his attic window into the street; there friendly dealers were on watch for it, and thence a parcel of money returned to him at the end of the line which had taken his panel out into the world. Be this as it may, the end of his apprenticeship found him sick and tired of seclusion and hard labour and dependence; and, refusing an offer from Romney of a three years' engagement at £300 a year, he went to live with a picture-dealer. Of course he took to seeing life, and to seeing it with gusto; and as in those days to see life was to be drunk often and to frequent all sorts of lusty company, it was not long ere Morland began to go to the bad. He had the appetites of a sailor come ashore from a seven years' cruise, and in his landlord he found (to complete the analogy) the cruellest of crimps. Escaping at last, he went to Margate, where he painted a number of miniatures, and whence he returned to London to produce his first successes—*The Idle Mechanic* and *The Industrious Mechanic*, which were instantly engraved—and to meet, woo, and marry Nancy Ward, a sister of Ward the engraver, who presently married Morland's sister, Maria. The two couples lived together till they quarrelled; when Morland, after a short stay in Great Portland Street, migrated to Camden Town, Lambeth, East Sheen,

Queen Anne Street, the Minories, Kennington, Hackney, and so to the 'rules' of the Bench, and, finally, to a spunging-house in Clerkenwell, where he fell ill and died.

His life, the while, was as it were a double strand of hard drinking and hard work. He 'spreed' at painting, and he 'spreed' at life. He produced with extraordinary facility; his hand was not less ready and accomplished than his brain was prodigal of pictorial inventions; he designed and painted subjects and animals, and indecencies, and landscapes, and marines, with equal gusto and dexterity and force; his temperament was so abounding that he was long able to keep pace with his abounding popularity; obliging dealers aiding, he coined himself into guineas, and so, like the reckless and passionate unthrift he was, he flung away his genius and his life in handfuls, till nothing good was left him but the silence and the decency of death.

In all the range of British art there are few things better than a good Morland. It has been complained of him that his tastes were 'coarse,' that his habit of mind was 'low,' that his was a 'vulgar and unseemly soul,' and all the rest of it; and it is obvious that for those who look to art for moral and spiritual meanings, and are content to do without painting if only they can carry away a little literature, his work is a kind of outrage. For Morland was nothing if not a painter, and Morland's pictures are nothing if not arrange-

ments of paint. He was a vigorous and expressive draughtsman; he had the craftsman's sense of his material and the craftsman's delight in the use of it. Further, he was a colourist; and the fact remains, that his pictures are painter's work, and, whatever their morals, must ever live with the eternal life of art.

## II

DAVID WILKIE 1785-1841

Wilkie, 'a pictorial Galt,' was less a painter—less a master of paint—than a delineator of character and 'an anecdotist in colour and form.' In that capacity he has given pleasure to several generations of good folks, who know not what painting is. His pictures were long most popular with engravers; and it is in these, I take it, that he survives, for 'tis a fact, I fear, that in this Burne-Jonesian, 'this ghastly, thin-faced time of ours' his colour feels mean, his drawing seems to lack energy and strength, his art is seen to partake too much of the character of cheap literature,[1]

[1] The 'Æsthetic Movement' has made painting so excessively literary, that either it is literature in a new medium or it is nothing. But the literature is not for the crowd: it is high-romantic, old-world, mystical; and with the crowd, which loves incident, and is interested in character, it passes for painting. All the same the difference between *The Blind Fiddler* and (say) *Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* is not so great as at first may seem. [1901.]

while he himself has far more the look of a man of letters who has deviated into paint than of the painter somehow mixed up with letters, which he really was. For all that, Wilkie's is a pathetic figure. If he erred, it was because he knew no better; and, being a Scot, he had but to learn the truth, to risk his all upon its capture. Paint as Velasquez knew it was unknown to Wilkie till he was a man of forty-two; and it is infinitely to his credit that he no sooner knew what it was than he began to experiment in the right use of it. That he should fail was inevitable: he had been going astray with all his heart for some five-and-twenty years, and the time of learning had passed for him. But at least he tried his best, and to the student of art the failures of his latter years are far more moving than the successes of his earlier days are 'humorous.' They show that he had in him to be good as well as popular, and that his consciousness of failure must have made life hard to endure.

## III

PROUT
1784-1852

The achievement of this pious and painful creature has provoked some ecstasies of encomium; but it is scarce possible to regard him as other than a good, honest, industrious, and faithful architectural draughtsman. If no more than painfulness and

piety be asked of him, he will triumph. But if his work be taken and considered as art —that alters the case; for it is found that there is no more warrant for his pre-eminency than a certain amount of rhetoric on the part of a third person. There is no doubt at all that Prout was conscientious, literal, exact, laborious; but neither is there any that his colour was poor and thin, that his method was small, and that, once we cease to consider him as a magazine of facts, he goes to the bottom of time with the great mass of the English Water-colour School.

## IV

HUNT
1790-1864

Hunt was deformed and sickly, never married, began by painting landscapes and vegetables, went on to deal with comic rustics, and ended as a painter of fruits and flowers. He was a patient, hard-working, devout student of facts, and he did his utmost to render the forms and hues and textures of objects with meticulous and literal fidelity. His success in the pursuit of this ambition has made his work the theme of an immense amount of overpowering eloquence; but his ideal, however estimable in itself, and however useful in the development of (say) a professor of botany, was in most respects remote from paint. In fact, his

regard for detail produced a style that is so niggled and so petty as to be merely contemptible; his determination to be exact resulted in the achievement of effects in colour that are only garish and unpleasing; in his resolve to omit nothing he lost count of his subjects as wholes, ignored such essentials as breadth and mass, forgot the very existence of such essentials as atmosphere and light. He was, no doubt, a pleasant humourist; he took an intelligent interest in a great variety of facts; he was always conscientious, and he was generally vulgar. Withal, he was so indifferent to—or so unconscious of—some primary constituents in art, that to call him artist is to abuse the word.

## V

LANDSEER
1802-1873

Sir Edwin Landseer's last years were wrecked with melancholy, his hand long outlived its cunning. All the same, he was probably the most popular painter that ever lived. The English are a sporting and a petting people; and in Landseer, with his extraordinary gift of sympathy with animals, they found and recognised an absolute English painter. Then, his facility was prodigious, and the chief engravers of his epoch—Holl, Cousins, Heath, Lewis, Thomas Landseer, Finden, Graves,

and the rest—were all employed upon him. At one time there was scarce a house in Britain that was not decorated with Landseers, and there are not many even now in whose decoration a Landseer is not included. It is, indeed, in black and white and at second-hand that the man is most himself. He is of those who read best in translation: he was, so far as paint is concerned, not specially an artist. Now and again he rises to a certain height of accomplishment, and is found capable of brilliant brushwork, and by no means blind to the fact that to exist as an arrangement in paint is a picture's first condition of excellence. But while, his notable and useless dexterity notwithstanding, his interest in the technical parts of art was superficial and intermittent, his interest in such minor elements as character and incident and sentiment was ever vivacious and acute; so that the bulk of his work was of its essence non-pictorial, and he survives as, not an artist in paint but, the author of a vast amount of graphic literature. In its way that literature is capital: it is full of emotion and humour, it is brilliant with invention, it is often moving, it is commonly ingenious and suggestive. But it is essentially popular, and it is mostly innocent of style.

## VI

HARVEY
1806-1876

Harvey was skilful, earnest, and ingenious; his invention was facile and sufficient; he drew cleverly and carefully; his ambition, while often too large for his capacity for expression, was always respectable and human. He is seen—as so many are seen—to greater advantage in his sketches, which are spirited and taking, than in his finished canvases, whose technical virtue is not often good enough, and whose colour is apt to be unattractive and uninspired. Coming in the brave days of *Waverley* and the romantic Renaissance, he chose, as was natural, his subjects rather more for their literary than for their pictorial quality, and was long content to practise what is called—obligingly enough—'imaginative art,' and to rival with Fraser and Allan in the production of painted illustrations. He had, however, a true affection for landscape: he used it with understanding and sincerity in most of his subject pictures, and for some years before his death he painted nothing else.

## VII

PHILLIP
1817-1867

Phillip, called 'Phillip of Spain,' began as a painting man of letters, and ended as something of a painter; and it is therefore safe to assume that, had he been born into a school, he would have been a painter from the outset, and at the last as

good a painter in fact as, by the operation of a pleasant patriotic fiction, he is sometimes made to seem. He was always less interested in paint than in character and incident; even in his best years his colour was rather vigorous and representative than spontaneously and essentially pictorial; he seldom failed to touch that note of commonness—of mind, intention, effect—which is the distinguishing mark of the popular artist. But he had a temperament of such uncommon energy and strength that at thirty-four, after making a wash-pot of Moab, and casting his shoe over Edom for full seventeen years, he was able to renew his ideals and his method and his style; and for the rest of his life he worked, according to his lights and in the measure of his strength, in the direction of better things. It is not for every one to lay down Wilkie for Velasquez; and it is saying much for Phillip that he did so to such good purpose as to leave to posterity the task of deciding whether he was, or was not, a painter.

## VIII

ROSSETTI
1828-1882

The results in poetry of Rossetti's last period were published soon after the end, and it was seen that they were the work of a man of genius who, if his imagination flashed splendidly now and then, had lost such hold as he might ever have had on the essentials

of his art. As for his painting, a chief ambition of his friends had been to keep his good things out of his reach; lest his humour of perfection —of elaboration, that is: elaboration and the imparting of extraordinary significancies—had been their ruin.

To be just to Rossetti is as difficult for his friends as for his enemies. These remain under the spell of his rare endowment; while those who knew him not, but still know art, are conscious mainly of the bastard issues to which he led, and the vicious methods which he practised into popularity. There are many to whom his merit consists in that he failed in two several arts, and yet contrived to create enthusiasts for and against his results in both; and the position of these is perhaps the safest of all. That in both he has but to be weighed in any balance to be found wanting is plain. What has yet to be demonstrated is to what the deficiency was due. Was it a fault of brain and temperament? and could Rossetti have done more than he did? Or was it inherent in the time? was it the absence of a convention and a school? the necessity of experiment? the quest of ideals impossible to realise, in that first of all they were dimly seen, and next that the means of expression—the grammar of style and words and paint—were only to be achieved through greater difficulty and distress than Rossetti and his disciples cared to face?

The truth is to find. What is not uncertain is that Rossetti himself was, from the first, and in both paint and poetry, peculiar to unhealthiness; and that, while in poetry and paint he was obviously a temperament, he habitually exacted of paint the effect of words, and resolutely imposed upon words the uses and the duties of paint, and so was what is called an artist in neither. He had ideas (technical and other), invention, imagination; or he could never have painted *The Blue Bower*, nor written *Love's Nocturn*, and *The Blessed Damozel*, and some passages of *The House of Life*. But it may—it must—be protested that the results, however vigorously and directly they appeal to a certain type of mind, are of their essence inartistic. Mr. Theodore Watts has written some eloquent and closely reasoned pages to show that Rossetti had the genius of verbal mystery, and was in touch with the many-sided, enormous, ever-shifting issues of romance; and Mr. Theodore Watts, who knows his trade, and has proved that he can handle his facts to good purpose, is no doubt right in some parts of his contention. But if he can read *Sister Helen*, for example, without wishing that at least a third of it had remained unwritten—or at least unprinted—then has he yet to show that he is fully alive to the perfection, and at every point awake to the completeness, of *Kubla Khan* and the *Ode to a Nightingale*: that (in fine) he knows the difference

between organic art and art that is inorganic in that the life it lives is only one of phrases and suggestions, the half of which we should have been spared, and whose aggregate effect is to set us wondering if Milton were not a mistake, and if Shakespeare would not really be the better (as Johnson suggested that he would) for a vast deal of chastisement. And if this be, as I believe it is, the case with Rossetti the poet, how and in what terms shall the case be stated against Rossetti the painter? Excessive, tortured, morbid, affected, call it what one will, Rossetti's feeling for words was real, and was now and then expressed in finely minted verses. Had he as real a feeling for paint? did he ever contrive a sequence of six brush or crayon strokes which are as instinct with brain and style as (for instance) his 'Against the sunset's desolate disarray' or his 'And thy heart rends thee, and thy body endures'? Was his colour at its best as exhilarating and delightful to the eye as—I'll not say Titian's but—Monticelli's, or as absolutely and innately a component of his idea as—I'll not say Rembrandt's but—Corot's? I do not think he had.

What is not doubtful is that on occasion his determination to have colour at any cost in verse, and poetry at any cost in colour, was so disastrously effective that it went far to confuse one art with another, and has left a myriad simple

souls—who at bottom only clamour to be edified: who resemble nothing so much, in fact, as those male and female children which are the School Board's natural prey—in an immense perplexity as to whether words and paint, and the ideals and conditions thereof, are, or are not, one and the same. And broadly stated, therein consists the argument against Rossetti. Was he, either in words or pigments, an artist? And if he were, what were Coleridge and Keats in the one medium, and what were Velasquez the brushman and Monticelli (say) the colourmonger in the other?

The truth is with Time. Meanwhile, Rossetti created a school of painter poets and a school of poet painters; in two arts he remains an influence for good or ill as marking as Wagner in music and drama; and in both his effect, being imperfect, will in the long run pass, and be forgotten as it had never been. The thought of such a waste of temperament and character, of the loss of so many genial conclusions, is saddening; but to be consoled one has but to remember that Constable — who is Corot, Rousseau, Troyon, Millet, the Marises, Israels—is actively alive. The processes of the Muse are bewildering and discomforting; but her issues are unchangeable, and her judgments compensate for all. [1889.]

## IX

Paul Chalmers went often afield in search of subjects; but he lived his life in Edinburgh. He was twice on the Continent, and a visit to Holland (in 1874) had a marked influence on him: however basely, his own style of handling was already in a line with Rembrandt's, and his fuller knowledge of that master's methods was an intractable inspiration. He was a born colourist: he was inclined to sacrifice everything to colour. His nature was intensely sympathetic: 'He could never paint what he did not feel.'[1] His early style was laboured and hard, but he developed larger methods. Much of his work remains incomplete, because his standard was so high, and his accomplishment so inexact, that he was apt to fail, and fail again, till he wearied of endeavour, and lost interest and heart. He was never careless nor superficial, but took infinite pains to master his subject, and get himself inside it; he has been known, indeed, to have as many as two-and-ninety sittings for a single portrait.[2] It was at once his misfortune and his fault that he could never satisfy himself: that he was unable to see

CHALMERS
1836-1878

[1] Who can? [1901.]

[2] I am told that the greatest English-speaking painter insists on even more. But, then, he always does the trick. Chalmers did not. [1901.]

when a picture was as complete as he could make it. In the result he loved mystery, half-tones, the intercourse of light and shade: whatever was hard and straight and precise was odious and unpaintable. He was sometimes an artist; he was always more or less artistic; but he was incomplete, or imperfectly developed. He was disastrously affected by irresolution and fastidiousness; but those who knew him best say that in years to be he would have outgrown his faults, and his genius would have had full play.

## X

PINWELL

1842-1875

Pinwell is better seen in black and white than in colour, as an illustrator than as a painter. He had plenty of invention, with a knack of composition, facility, a certain prettiness and charm; and as his drawing was neat, and his literary apprehensiveness was real, he was found successful in suggesting his authors' meanings to their readers: so that for him to annotate a given text in pictures was held a piece of luck for both poet and public. In water-colours his merits are less obvious—or, rather, are largely vitiated by the presence of some strong defects. His style was neither broad nor vigorous, and he had a tendency to be niggled and small in handling, lively in colour,

broken in composition, and divided in effect. Against all this, there must be set the fact that, young as he died, he was somebody, and had already identified himself, with Walker and Mason, with a new move in art.

## XI

FRANK HOLL 1845-1888

In Holl's essays in *genre* he strikes a note which is not altogether his own—which sounds, indeed, to better purpose and with a fuller and richer sonority, in the work of Israels. His material is the pathos of poverty; his colour is sombre to unpleasantness; his effects are deliberately melancholy. In portraiture, however, he remains a personality. He was the painter of men. His studies of the other sex are neither sympathetic nor intelligent: the pictorial capacity latent in the costumes and the characteristics of modern womanhood were not apparent to him; he was lacking in elegance, grace, the sexual interest, the underwear of gaiety and *esprit*; and he did well to permit himself few chances of failure. But to the representation of the manhood of his time — its statesmen, churchmen, financiers, soldiers, vestrymen — he brought some painter's attributes. A student of Velasquez (to consider whose work he made, quite late in life, a special journey to Madrid), he was himself a craftsman. His brush-work, if somewhat

wanting in distinction, was measured, dexterous, and significant; he was painter-like in his use of paint, if the pattern on which his scheme was executed was nearly always unbeautiful, and commonplace more often than not; his inventions, albeit in some sort coarse, were legitimate in design and striking in effect; his drawing was vivacious and correct; and his modelling, while deficient in subtlety, said all it set out to say. Again, his insight was direct and truthful: he was unrivalled in his generation in a capacity for seeing his sitters as materials for official portraitures, and for expressing their public humanity in the terms of paint; and though he cannot be held to have had style—in the sense that Sir Joshua, or even Gainsborough, had style—he had a manner, and that manner his own. It has been said of him that he painted history. But he was the historian of an age of prose, and his medium was ever the prose of paint, and was sometimes its journalese.

## XII

George Manson died at twenty-six; but he had lived long enough to show that he had a root of the matter in him. His draughtsmanship was expressive; his colour, while low in key and limited in range, was real; his interest in his material was

MANSON
1850-1876

sensuous as well as intellectual; he was addicted to the representation of character and humour, but he expressed himself in pictorial terms. It is probable that with him, as with some other 'inheritors of unfulfilled renown'—a phrase that seems to act on men like haschisch in the way of developing an abnormal sense of possibilities—too much has been made of what he did, and far more than enough of what he never got a chance to do. But there is little doubt that he would have lived a painter, and that his death was a loss to the Scottish School.

# TWO MODERNS

## I

CHARLES KEENE 1823-1891

WERE the august, unedifying corporation presided over by Sir Frederick Leighton elected on the sole grounds of art, a very large proportion of Mr. Charles Keene's innumerable contributions to *Punch* would have been signed and sponsored by a real R.A. It has been said, indeed—and with only a seeming exaggeration—that there is right pictorial art enough in any one of that gentleman's *Punch* drawings to furnish forth a whole gallery in the summer exhibition at Burlington House, and leave no inconsiderable amount of the same rare quality for distribution among such of the sacred Forty as have not already come in for their share. It sounds excessive; but the sense is beyond dispute. Pictorial art is not wholly a matter of paint and canvas and gold frame and a number in a catalogue. On the contrary, it is so little a matter of these things that it is absent from at least nine-tenths of the combinations of these things which are achieved and presented in the course of the Royal-Academical year.

Mr. Keene has never dealt in any of them, it is believed; or if he have, it has been so much for his own amusement that he has never deigned to ask the public what it thought of his results. But for all that he has been almost insolently prodigal of proofs that he possesses all the essential qualities that go to make the true pictorial artist, and possesses them in rare fulness of measure. Thus, to begin with, he is a draughtsman of singular faculty and skill, whose touch is large, unfaltering, admirably adroit, and more capable, certainly, of suggestion and expression than that of any other living Englishman; he is a colourist in black-and-white, and it is a continual refreshment to the eye to watch him so balancing his masses, and so arranging his lights and shadows, as to make his work above and before everything else a picture; his capacity for design—for covering a given surface with a rhythmical and orderly arrangement of forms and lines—is inexhaustible; his gift of selecting and presenting the purely pictorial elements of a character or a scene is so seldom found wanting that its exercise seems almost mechanical. It is just these qualities that are inconspicuous in modern English paint, and it is in the possession of just these qualities that Mr. Keene is thrice-fortunate. There is no doubt that he is a student of character, none that he is an excellent humourist, none that his results are commonly touched with the right

inspiration of comedy or farce. But it is the prime distinction of his work to be essentially art. You look at it as an aspect, a pictorial combination of black-and-white, an effect achieved by certain contrasts of light with dark and line with form, before you dream of inquiring into its details, and you master it point by point before you care to take a thought of the legend it is supposed to illustrate. The character, the fun, the furniture and decoration—in a word, the literary interest—are all subordinate to the pictorial quality. Yes, the old gentleman (now you look at him !) is delightful, of course ; and the suggestion of breadth and extreme solidity conveyed by the back-view of his helpmeet is simply enchanting. But these elements are only a pretext for design. The facts are beyond questioning, the presentation of character is not less exhilarating than accomplished, the jest is delightfully conveyed; but the artist has seen them first and last, not as so much literature-in-the-flat but, as so many elements in a scheme essentially and unalterably pictorial. That they happen to be interesting and attractive for other reasons and from another point of view has really nothing to do with it. The effect of Rodin's bronzes is liberally and intensely suggestive of human passion ; but they begin and end as achievements in sculpture. It is the same—*mutatis mutandis*—with the black-and-whites of Mr. Charles Keene. Their effect is

largely humourous, but they begin and end as achievements in design.

They say that his range is limited; and if they leave out of count—as undoubtedly they do—his notable gift of art, they are well within their rights. Mr. Keene the humourist is not nearly so rich and vigorous and varied an experience as Mr. Keene the master of colour and design. But Mr. Keene the humourist is the last in the world to be put superbly by. His material is either ugly or grotesque: he cannot present you with a lady, and there is more than a smack of the 'commercial' in his gentlemen; his maids are own sisters to their mistresses, and his Highland chieftains are of one strain with the gillies and the keepers that accompany their walks abroad. But the reproach is not for Mr. Keene alone. John Leech, for instance, never drew a lady; his gentlemen are 'tigers' one and all; his type of beauty is about as variable as the aspect and effect of a *Times* leader; he is the funniest person (perhaps!) that ever expressed himself in drawing; but his limitations are as plain as the nose on your face. Mr. Du Maurier, again—well! does Mr. Du Maurier's range come any nearer to being universal than Leech's? And is it, when all's said, so much as a barleycorn wider than Mr. Keene's? His high-nosed Duchess, his long-legged Colonel, his Bishop, his Vulgarian, his German Musician—has not one seen them all

a thousand times? Does not one know them as one knows the clock? There is nothing in physiognomy if his Maids are not their own Mistresses in disguise: there is nothing in heredity if his Butlers are not his Bishops just a little run to seed. Mr. Keene is not nearly so funny as Leech, and has no more right to be accused of 'universality of type' (as the saying is) than Mr. Du Maurier: though if it came to design—to the comparison of the two as artists pure and simple—there would, may be, be something else to say. But within his marches he not only calls nobody master but is far and away the best and strongest champion we have. His Scotsmen may or may not be all the heirs of Bruce and Burns would like, but they are irresistibly funny; his 'gents' are gents innate and irreclaimable, his servant-girls have scarce an aspirate in all the length and breadth of their constitutions; his cooks, his keepers, his cabmen, his elderly ladies, his Irish peasants, his board-school boys and teachers—if all these be not intimately observed and absolutely realised, then, surely, the theory of observation and the ideal of realisation are lost. As for his drunkards—(English and Scots)—and his old gentlemen in the City, I hold them sacred, and I 'll not discuss them—I will look, and uncover, and pass. They are among the good things of comic art; and to speak of them save with gratitude and respect were to show oneself unworthy their acquaintance.

The man with whom he has most in common is Honoré Daumier, and that this can be said of him is vastly in his praise, for Daumier was the greatest master of the grotesque that ever found expression in line. Like Mr. Keene's, his material is either ugly or ridiculous; and to consider his fierier energy, his more consummate mastery of means, his ampler and more vigorous capacity for realisation and suggestion, is to exult in the reflection that an Englishman is the richest of his heirs. [1890.]

## II

AUGUSTE RODIN

To talk of a British school of sculpture were much the same as to talk of woods where are no trees. They have managed the matter far better in France, for there the sculpturesque tradition is centuries old, and has endured without a break: so that where *we* have perforce to refer to Torrigiano and Roubillac and Canova and Boehm—foreigners all, yet British in virtue of their achievement—they can discourse at will of Jean Goujon and Puget, of Houdon and Rude and Barye, to name but these, who are French of the French in virtue of birth and training and convention. Just now, it is true, we can rejoice in the work of Messrs. Gilbert and Onslow Ford; but both these are French by education and

accomplishment, and against them Paris can set a round dozen at least: among them such men as Paul Dubois, Mercié, Gaudez, Dalou, Cain, Fremiet, and above all Auguste Rodin: the last a culmination after his kind, whose work is instinct with genius, as well as being a prodigy of accomplishment and style.

There is little to say of him by way of biography. He is some forty or fifty years old; he was a pupil of Barye and Carrier-Belleuse; he worked a great deal at Sèvres; he has 'ghosted' in his time, and in his time has been accused of casting his creations from the life; he has received some third-class medals; he has been twice or thrice the hero of a Government purchase; he is represented in the Luxembourg; he had the honour to be rejected a year or two ago by the jury of the English Royal Academy; he is the author of a *John-Baptist*, an *Age of Bronze*, an *Eve*, a number of busts — Rochefort, Hugo, Carrier-Belleuse, Antonin Proust, Henri Becque, and others—the tremendous group, *les Calaisiens*, for Calais, innumerable *figurines* and fantasies; he has been engaged for years on a pair of bronze doors for the Palais des Arts Décoratifs — the most prodigious monument to Dante and the *Commedia* that has yet been done; he is just now busy with a memorial to Bastien-Lepage for Damvilliers and a *Claude Lorraine* for Nancy. That is about all that need—or can—be told of the

man; while as for the artist, his time is to come, and as yet he exists but for his fellow-craftsmen and the few outside the arts that know and are moved by greatness when they see it.

Yes; greatness is the word. So excellent a judge as M. Dalou, the artist of much that is large in conception and vigorous and accomplished in method and style, has declared that when the century goes out it will remember the aforesaid pair of doors as its heroic achievement in sculpture; and M. Dalou speaks as one having authority and in the name, I take it, of all his brother-wooers of the Muse. And if that be true—as I believe it to be true—then where between himself and Michelangelo is there so lofty a head as Rodin's? True, there is Barye; and he, too, had genius and style, and he, too, was a path-breaker and an influence. And true, there was Alfred Stevens, who was gifted as few have been, and whose work is by far the best evidence of a capacity for the highest in sculpture that Britain has to show. But Barye's range was limited: great artist, and great sculptor as he was, he was an *animalier* or he was something of a mediocrity; and great artist, and great sculptor, as he was, he had the faults of his environment, and was a victim as well as a hero of Romanticism. As for Stevens, he might, sure, have done anything he chose, and have risen to those heights of achievement which are inaccessible to all but the very great; but his lot

was cast on evil days, and he remains an example of the strange, perplexing carelessness with which our Britain wastes her rarest and sweetest energies. It is different with Rodin. He has suffered like the rest—like Barye, Millet, Corot, Rembrandt, all the men who came with a message to times not ready to give it ear; but like these others he has made his chance, and like these others he has assured himself of victory. His busts alone were enough to place him in the future: the style of them is so complete, the treatment so large and so distinguished, the effect so personal yet so absolute in art. The *Hugo*, for example, makes you wonder that the *Contemplations*, and the *Misérables* are no stronger than they are; and the *Hugo*, if it be the one on which the master lingered longest, is by no means the most irresistible of the group. And the busts, whatever their number, and whatever their individual and collective worth, are only one entry in the general account. The hand that modelled these austere yet passionate statements of virile force and suffering and endowment, and expressed their sculpturesque quality in such terms of art as recall the achievement of Donatello himself, can on occasion create such shapes of beauty, and such suggestions of elegance and charm, as put the Clodions and the Pradiers to the blush, and enable you to realise, in the very instant of comparison and contrast, the difference

between the art that is great whatever its motive and its inspiration and the art that only passes for great because it happens to be gracious and popular. And with Rodin, as with Rabbi Ben Ezra, 'the best is yet to be.' His *Bastien-Lepage*—which shows the painter at his easel in his working dress, straining his shaded eyes to focus an effect of light—is an achievement in 'realism' that may change the course of monumental art; his *Calaisiens*—his miserable burghers taking leave of their fellow-townsmen and in act to follow the lead of the heroic Eustache de Saint-Pierre—is such a reading of history into sculpture as only comes to a man of genius, and therewith such a suggestion of human emotion as could be achieved by none save a master-craftsman, who is also a great creative artist; while as for the Dante Doors—so abounding in invention, in realisation and suggestion, in accomplishment of the rarest type—what is left to say of them? Except that Rodin, like Dante, has 'seen hell,' and, like Dante, has turned the experience into immortal art, there is not much. Here, if you will, are a thousand hints of the possibilities of human passion: from Paolo and Francesca melting into each other:—

'La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante':—

as no man and woman have done in sculpture since sculpture began, to the nameless miscreants, the

very dregs of the damned, that crawl and writhe and foison—always in the terms of sculpture!—up and down, and in and out, and here and there and everywhere, in enormous yet distinguishable complexity all over the master's achievement. But here too is art: here is sculpture in its essence, sculpture with all its conditions accepted and fulfilled, sculpture as strictly sculptural as the Parthenon Frieze. You may read into it as much literature as you please, or as you can; but the interpolation is not Rodin's but your own. Sculptor he is, and sculptor he remains. No doubt he has read his Dante, and no doubt his work would have been other than it is had his Dante gone unread. But it exists apart from Dante, and if the *Commedia* were suddenly to disappear, the loss would be—so far as Rodin's work is concerned—no loss at all. It is not literature in relief nor literature in the round: it is sculpture pure and simple. And if the sons of men habitually expressed themselves in similar terms, that literary quality on which, the race being what it is, it cannot choose but depend for the louder and the more instant part of its fame—that literary quality would cease from troubling, and the thing itself would exist as sculpture pure and simple: as those prodigious and dreadful conceptions of line and mass and surface, imagined by Michelangelo in memory of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, exist as sculpture pure and simple; with the in-

comparable prose of Donatello and the august heroic poetry of Phidias and Praxiteles.

It has been said that Rodin's art is an expression of passion. That is true; but it is true in one sense only. Passion to him is wholly a matter of form and surface and line, and exists not apart from these. In other words Rodin is a sculptor. His expression consists in line and form and surface; without these he were merely inarticulate—were only the man in the street. That much he has recognised; and the result of his recognition is that he lives for art, and that—his gift being what it is—if sculpture should die with him, the end would be not unworthy of the best that has gone before. He is our Michelangelo; and if he had not been that, he might well have been our Donatello. And with Phidias and Lysippus all these some-and-twenty centuries afar, what more is left to say of the man of genius whose art is theirs? [1890.]

# A CRITIC OF ART

*I. M.*

R. A. M. S.

1847-1900

*Concerning Critics*

Stevenson's *Velasquez* is no new book: it has had some years of life, and, if good work count for aught in time and achievement, it must certainly endure while painters paint, and men delight, or are interested, in their work. I know but one book to place beside it in English, and that is the author's *Rubens*[1]; and I think that as yet there is but one in French—the admirable *Maîtres d'autréfois* of Eugène Fromentin—which has anything like its interest alike for artist and for connaisseur. This is as much as to say that it and its companion—the *Rubens*—are the sole pieces of 'art criticism,' in the right sense of the phrase, that we have. Now, there are critics and critics, and between them it

[1] At the time of writing the apprehensive and charming *causerie* which prefaces Mr. Heinemann's *Raeburn* had not been published.

is as variable service as between your fat King and your lean Beggar. 'Enfin,' Balzac said of the Steinbock of *la Cousine Bette*: the Steinbock who, having approved himself a sculptor, and won old Hulot's daughter to wife, forgot his duty, and kissed his genius dead in the arms of Mme. Marneffé: 'Enfin il passa critique comme tous les artistes qui mentent à leurs débuts.' This he said, being wellnigh at the end of his career, in a moment of peculiar scorn; and there is a sense in which the saying is eternally true; a sense, too, in which it is capable of universal application. To Balzac the critic was a writing or painting creature which had failed, but which, in its endeavour to succeed, had learned enough to be able to make the worst of any good thing done outside the confines of its crawl; and I suppose that, as Balzac knew his Paris, and suffered in his person from all sorts and conditions of critical activities, from Ste.-Beuve downwards, we may take his word for it that critics of this make there have ever been, and will ever be, while there are masters of genius to set their little faculties at work. Comes the question:—*What* is a critic? And even here, in face of the answer that a critic is a man with a special and peculiar gift of appreciation, you will find, if you care to look, a certain indestructible element of rightness in Balzac's description. It may be that he was thinking, when he made it, of the literary critic best esteemed in

literary history. I mean Ste.-Beuve. He, also, was of those artists 'qui mentent à leurs débuts'; for he began by publishing a volume of verse, which nobody ever reads, and a novel, which, as I believe, not half a dozen living men have read. Yet was he an incomparable critic of the arts in which he failed;[1] and we are as like to see another Hugo, another Alfred de Vigny even, as another Ste.-Beuve. And as Balzac's utterance was true of Ste.-Beuve, so likewise was it true, in varying degrees, of the authors of *Velasquez* and *les Maîtres d'autrefois*. Both began in paint, and the best of both is seen in letters. There is a difference. The author of *Dominique* and the *Maîtres d'autrefois* came near to being a painter; the author of the *Velasquez* and the *Rubens* never did anything of the kind. Yet both were critics of the sole virtuous type. Both had the divine gift of appreciation; both had painted enough to be experts in the technique of painting; to neither one nor other might a painter appeal as a man of letters gone wrong; by both a painter, if he so appealed, was taken at his own valuation, and cast into outer darkness; by both a picture was appreciated

[1] 'After all, what are the critics? Men who have failed in literature and art.' Thus after Balzac: thus, or very nearly thus, for I quote from memory: the Disraeli of *Lothair*; who also *savait son monde*; who also had suffered; who, in defining, voiced the passion of a thousand sufferers less courageous than himself, whether to strike or steal.

from the painter's point of view; by both, and especially by the author of *Velasquez*, it was asserted, not categorically but none the less triumphantly, that the painter sees life, form, colour, romance, beauty, passion, solely in the terms of paint: so that he who reads words into paint is merely a literary person who might be very much better employed. Both, in fact, were anti-Ruskin; and as yet the success of both seems in some sort inconsiderable. I say 'seems,' for I believe that both have won the race hands down.[1]

R. A. M. STEVENSON

I have not to write an appreciation of *les Maîtres d'autrefois*: if I had, I should have to transmute into English that wonderful three-page portrait of Van Dyck. What I have to do, so far as literature is concerned, is to note that in the *Velasquez* and the *Rubens* Stevenson has done for England what in the first book Eugène Fromentin did for France. Till he came, the literature of that England which he loved so well: the literature in which are compre-

[1] I do not forget Mr. Whistler's enchanting *Ten o'Clock*. But that is as it were an indigestion of strawberries, a feast for the high Gods; and I fear that it has not had anything like the effect to which its art and brilliancy, let alone its mere rightness, entitle it.

hended the Shakespeare and the Milton he adored: had, as they say, 'no show' in this matter. Art-criticism, so called, was a raging and soul-moving business. Ruskin, for instance, uplifted a most beautiful voice, and tenored nonsense, nonsense, for many years and through interminable volumes, about Turner, Constable, Rembrandt, Angelico, Carpaccio, William Hunt—the Lord knows who; others did likewise about Rossetti, others about Millais, others yet about Burne-Jones. I do not say that such literary exercises as *Modern Painters* and the rest are impossible; for to say that were to say that I believe, for one thing, in the disappearance of that singular and penetrating product of the years, the Person Who has Found Culture, and, for another, in the miraculous development by everybody who goes to the Royal Academy exhibitions of a feeling for paint. But I insist upon it that, since Stevenson lived to produce his *Velasquez* and his *Rubens*, and in the achieving of these ends gave the public a chance of understanding what the painter means when he puts forth a picture, the chances are largely in favour of the gradual elimination of literary interest from the art-critic's tale of tools. The good public is, after all, not nearly the Fool Collective that some would have us believe. To appeal to it through paint alone were to play skittles with certain of its best renowned privileges: its understanding of and delight in books,

and its romantic, not to say bookish, view of what it holds to be nature. So to the end of time Apelles must reckon on his Cobbler: even as to the end of time the most of men and women will see in a picture only as much of it as their acquaintance with letters and life lets them see, and will applaud a painter only in proportion as his theory of life and letters jumps with theirs.

*His influence*

But the human race is compounded of many perplexing and delightful differences. In a very great part of it there must exist the sense of colour, or the sense of line, or the sense of line and colour. There are years and years between these and the message of the *Velasquez*. But the message will win to these in time and by degrees. The time may be long, the degrees seem imperceptible. But the message will arrive. Stevenson is dead but now. But I love to think: if you will, to cherish the illusion: that what is called art criticism can scarce ever be quite the same it was when he began his work of suggestion, edification, inspiration. Then it was all rhetoric and morals. You esteemed a painter because he exampled the charm of the domestic hearth; or because, Nature being the sole and only thing worth taking to your soul, he treated Nature as a common harlot,

and did what he would with her; or because he could neither paint nor draw, yet, in the absence of both drawing and painting, he appeared to have something to say which, ill said or not at all, was yet so gloriously suggested, that there you were, you know! There you were! But for Stevenson, there you might be still. But, in his placating, irresistible way, he took his public to first principles. He stood by the elements of art. He led you back to what he would (in talk) have called the Almighty Swells. And in the light of his smile, not less than in the light of his teaching, such a pious and painful achievement in pictorial sampler-work as *The Briar Rose* (say) never so much as began to be. Titian, Claude, Rembrandt, Corot —to one ever fresh from communing with these kings of paint, how else than futile could this poor monument of industry appear?[1]

Yet this *Velasquez* of his, in which, having as by art-magic got into the painter's skin, he explains his man's intentions and expresses his man's results with a sobriety of method, a justness of tone, a precision of phrase which make it literature—this book, I say, is as it were the worst of him. *'Bob'*

[1] A true painter so far as he went, he would have nought to do with any of this school, excepting always the man of

I ever esteemed him a far rarer spirit, a far more soaring and more personal genius than I found in his famous cousin; and in this view I was in no wise singular. Had you met him by chance, and been privileged to hear him discourse on his prime subject, you must inevitably have thought him a prince among artists: so full of reasoned inspiration were his conclusions, so luminous his statements, so far-reaching and suggestive his illustrations. You could not have helped yourself; yet in the end you must have wept to find yourself mistaken. For mistaken you must certainly have been: the truth being that this wonderful and delightful creature, though he might have stood for the Ideal Artist, had never an art complete in all his fascinating and unique endowment. Contained in him were the beginnings of all the arts that be; but they were inarticulate, and as it were incapable of self-assertion. He painted in a way; but his pictures were only suggestions for pictures; and he knew it. I have seen verse of his, fit and unfit for print, which showed that he knew as much of Milton's aims and processes as he did of

character who, *à ses heures*, came almost as right in paint as he got near to being right in poetry: I mean Dante Rossetti. For the rest, the painters closest to him in fact and sentiment were the great landscapists of the school which culminated in Corot. Theirs was the art of painting as he practised it; and his was practically the first voice uplifted this side the Channel in their praise.

Corot's. He delighted in great music—in Gluck, Mozart, Handel, Beethoven; but his sense of it was rhythmical,[1] so that to him melody was largely a matter of accent and symmetry. I need scarce say that music ended for him with Beethoven. He had a kind of technical interest in Berlioz, as a great artist in orchestral colouring and the romance of instrumentation; but for Wagner he cared little. In his serene and omniscient enthusiasm he made light of popularities: as Rossini's, or the late Munkàcsy's, or the living Holman Hunt's. He hated emphasis, and would be content with naught save elegance, dignity, truth. Truth he would have; but if it came to him vulgarly handled—as it did in the achievement of (say) Millais—he withdrew into himself, and sought it elsewhere. If he failed to find an ideal in Wagner, he turned, with a far-away smile in those 'eyes of youth' of his, and looked in Corot, or Milton, or Gluck. He got one in all these; and he was content to rejoice, and let the phrasers, the Rhetoricians with a Purpose, go. I speak as one unauthorised and unofficial: as one, too, who had not seen and talked with him of late; but I should say that in the complete

[1] One day, wanting to tell me of a certain number in *Jephthah*, he beat it out on the piano, using the keyboard at large. We got the music afterwards; and the rhythm and the rhythmical effect were exactly as he had sketched them. But the intervals were Handel's.

and absolute fusion of sentiment with dignity he found his chief joy in life. A good Corot, a good Wordsworth sonnet, the *Andante* of the C Minor symphony, a passage in *Paradise Lost* or the *Agonistes*, the *Lances*, the 'Troubled Soul' in Gluck's *Orphée*—with these he was at home. They came naturally to him. The second-best did not. I would say of him that he had so fine and so instant a sense of essentials, so large and luminous an outlook on results, that, being human and sincere, he could not find in himself the strength with which to essay achievement. At his cradle the Good Fairy said:—'I give him all the gifts, and he may do anything.' But her Wicked Sister smiled, and answered:—'He shall have so much brains that he shall be merely futile.' The Bad Fairy was wrong, in part; for he created art-criticism in England, and his creation will not cheerfully be let die. But, as an artist, he was inarticulate; so that so far the Wicked Fairy was justified.

## *In Letters and Talk*

Literature is the nearest of the arts; for the material of it is words, and words are the stuff of intercourse, the material of life. It is not, then, surprising that Stevenson, having failed in paint, began to express himself in words. I have always regarded his resolve as a piece of heroism; for it was my

privilege to put him in the right way, to shape his beginnings, to find him outlets for the critical stuff that was seething and teeming in him: even as it was my pain to overlook his efforts to write formal English, and so to discipline his hand that in the end the *Velasquez* became possible. He hated the process. Give him paint and a canvas, and he could splash and 'wallow' and enjoy himself; give him a piano, and a sonata, or the redaction of a symphony, or a great and noble piece of Gluck, or Handel, or Mozart, and he was happy as a king. But letters . . . a pen, and a pot of ink, and a few sheets of paper, and then . . . nothing! Or nothing till the journal appeared. And then what misery, what shame, what an odious and horrible difference between the ambition and the effect! In brief, he loathed it all; and had there been no wolf at the door, there had been no R. A. M. S. Happily the wolf was there; and the *Velasquez* was only a question of time. I had hoped for much else: a Philosophy of Life, perhaps; perhaps, had the Gods been more than common kind, an essay: lofty yet humorous, real yet fantastic: in Romance. But I think I should ever have held that his true gift was Talk. And he had it—Heavens! in what perfection! I have heard the best of my time; but among them there is but one R. A. M. S.

In a famous essay on *Talk and Talkers,* his cousin has done his best to make him immortal.

*The Cousins*

But he tells of the 'Bob' of an early date: of the 'Bob' who, himself a man grown, a graduate of Cambridge, with his mind—(such a mind as it was: daring, humorous, imaginative, inordinately apprehensive and alert!)—made up on most of the essentials in Life and Time and Eternity, came on him where he lay—'ill abed, surrounded with manuscripts'—haled him out into the open air, taught him to drink and think, to 'swallow formulas' of every sort, to see that he could not live his life in Edinburgh, that art and life and morals were not made in that unnatural way, that the true God was not of that particular middle-class device, and that the right set of things was to get out into the open, cleanse your soul and spirit in the ancient, wholesome fashion, and push forth into the Infinite on your own account. Lewis Stevenson was, of course, for all his weak lung, one of Fortune's favourites; but I have ever thought, and I shall ever believe that, in having his cousin for a chief influence in his beginnings, he was favoured beyond Fortune's wont. Be this as it may, the 'Bob' he pictures in Spring-Heeled Jack, the 'loud, copious, and intolerant talker,' in whom he takes such just delight, is a Bob not known to the present generation. 'Tis a good ten years since I saw the last of that exorbitant and

amazing person: a person, be it noted, ever, for all his amazingness and for all his exorbitancy —ever an influence for the best, alike in Morals and in Art; and I can say with a certain assurance that the younger men knew nothing of him. What they got in his room was a Someone, bright-eyed, a little flushed, ever courteous, ever kindly, ever humorous, taking any bit of the Universe as his theme, descanting upon it as if he had a prescriptive right in it, and delighting every one who listened by the unfailing excellence, wisdom, sanity (however insane it seemed at times!) of what he had to say. Says a friend of his, and mine:—'He was commentary, and that should go on for ever. Good commentary on whatever God saw fit to provide. It seems to me to dwindle the applications of the Universe that it can no longer serve for his interpretations.' That, I take it, is Bob caught in the act of walking the heights, and discoursing, as he went, on things above him and below. And had Lewis lived to reassert himself, in the warm body, as he went on till the end asserting himself in cold print; and had it been possible for any of us to sit and heed while these two—the Master and the Pupil—talked of That which is, That which must be, and That which may be; then should we have heard about the best that speech can do.

Meanwhile, both lived in Arcadia, and both are dead :—

> Cold, cold as they that lived and loved
> A thousand years ago.

*Par Nobile Fratrum*

Each is a loss to us. But I think, as I sit here grieving for both, that we shall get ten Lewises, or an hundred even, or ever we get a Bob. Nothing like him has ever passed through my hands. He was what I have said ; and there was in him a something mystical which I, who was long as close to him as his shirt, never quite fathomed. Whatever it be worth, he died in the glory of an unalterable Belief. So, if his radiant spirit endured undimmed these gradual and shameful processes of dissolution by which so many of us, poor worms that we are, are passed into the unbroken Silence, to himself he went trailing clouds of glory. So would he die happily, as he had lived well ; and, with the antient, brave valediction : *Ave, frater, atque Vale* : so I leave him. [1900.]

THE END

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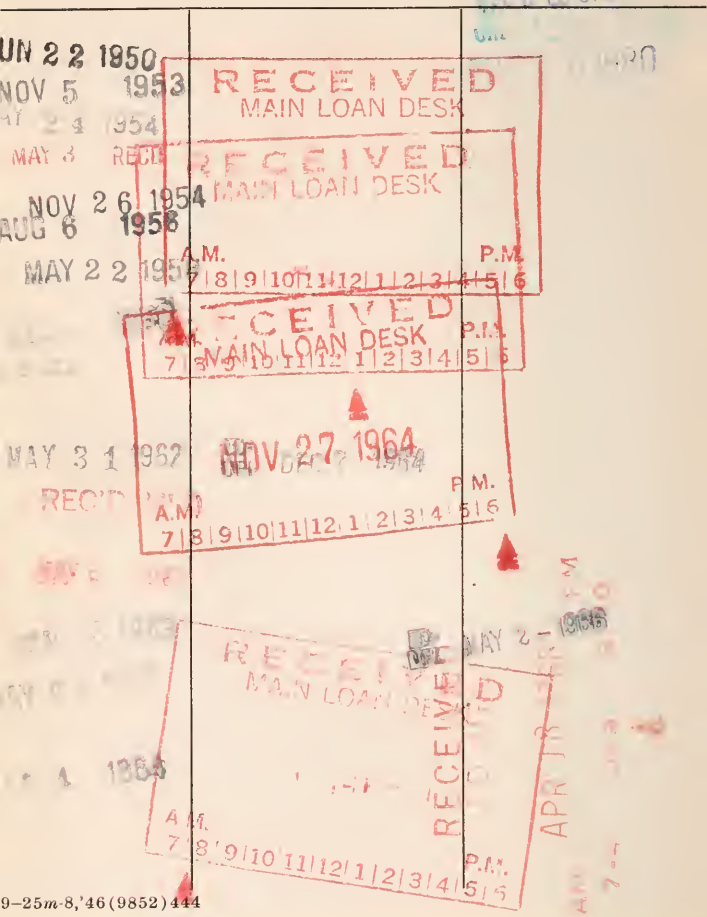


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